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LIFE AND SERVICE SERIES

STUDIES IN THE PARABLES OF JESUS
HALFORD E. LUCCOCK

HEART MESSAGES FROM THE PSALMS
RALPH WELLES KEELER

ELEMENTS OF PERSONAL CHRISTIANITY
WILLIAM S. MITCHELL

LIFE AND SERVICE SERIES

Edited by HENRY H. MEYER

Elements of Personal Christianity

By
WILLIAM S. MITCHELL

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NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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LIFE AND SERVICE SERIES

Evidences are not wanting of an increasing popular demand for short courses in Bible study, and for courses dealing with various practical aspects and problems of Christian experience. Such studies are demanded for use as elective courses in Adult Bible classes, among voluntary study groups in colleges and preparatory schools and for high-school credit in week-day religious instruction.

The textbooks in the Life and Service Series, to which this volume belongs, are intended to meet these various needs. The Series includes studies in selected portions of the Old and New Testaments, in Christian doctrine, practical ethics, social service, and other subjects of special interest.

In Elements of Personal Christianity the author discusses, in the characteristic language of young people and from their viewpoint, some of the more vital problems of religious faith and practice. This book is the third to be issued in this Series. Others are in preparation.

The Editors.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

WHAT a wonderful thing the Christian life is—and how little we know about it! Religion is at once the most familiar and the most mysterious thing in our experience. The reason for this is the way in which we treat it. We shroud it with mystery and sanctify it by separation from everyday life. We devise a special phraseology to describe it. We use a special tone in speaking of it. The result is that we make a mystery of that which should be as intelligible and natural as nature or science.

This brief discussion of the elements of personal religion is intended to be such a frank approach. Conventional phraseology has been avoided, and the effort made to look at these vital problems through the eyes of youth, facing them, as youth faces every other problem of life, with a sincere question as to their inner truth before commitment to them as a principle of life. They will stand the test.

WILLIAM S. MITCHELL.

LIBRARY.

CHAPTER I

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Matt. 7. 15-23

Not What but Who!

That makes a difference, doesn't it? We are so accustomed to cataloguing folks by *whats*—What does he wear? What does he do? What does he own? What does he think? What does he want? And most of these "whats" never get below the surface to the real person at all. But *who?* That touches the real you, the real me, doesn't it?

Let us ask our question over again, remembering this: "*Who* is a Christian?"

Are *you* a Christian?

"I belong to the church—if that is what you mean." "I go to church; I am enrolled in the Sunday school; I belong to the young people's society. My father and mother are Christians."

Yes, but are *you* a Christian?

"Well, I pray. I'll own up that at times it is pretty mechanical; that while my lips are repeating the familiar words of the prayer, my mind is wandering. I read my Bible—not so faithfully perhaps as I should; but I do respect it and know that I ought to read it more. I believe in Jesus Christ, and in heaven, and in the certainty of doom for the sinner who does not repent. I accept the atonement of the cross. Yes, I suppose [doubtfully] that I have as good a claim as another to call myself a Christian. What do you think?"

And what do *you* think? Would *you* consider such a person as this a Christian? Is he a Christian? Is she a Christian? What do you honestly think?

The Christian Center

There is a focal center to everything which is more than

merely the product of chance. There is a center to a seed, for at its heart is the germ which gives it life. There is a center to our physical life, for without a heart the body could not remain a living thing. Without a sun we should have no solar system but only "wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds."

Certainly, then, the Christian life has a center that determines it. If we can only find out what that center is, then we shall surely know who is a Christian. The presence or the absence of this central thing will settle the question. If it is present, the life is Christian. If it is missing, that cannot be a Christian life. But if there is such a center, what is it?

Possible Claimants

Appearance is one of these. A Christian is anybody who seems to be a Christian. You know what I mean: You must be a Christian if you appear to be good, if you go to church regularly, if you pray publicly and testify and belong to church. These acts should be sufficient proof that anyone is a Christian. What do you think?

Appearances are deceitful things. We do not ordinarily trust them too far. Wolves camouflaged as sheep are as common to-day as in the days of Matthew. Persons who seem right do not always prove to be right. The apple that seems luscious may, after all, be sour or tasteless. The flower suggesting perfume may possess no fragrance whatever. No, seeming is not sufficient as the determining factor as to who is a Christian. Hypocrites make good prayers frequently. Even really wicked people sometimes appear to be good and deceive the wisest of us.

Profession is another claimant. A Christian is anyone who professes to be a Christian. There are many ways of professing this. He may announce it by referring to it frequently, by public identification with the Christian enterprise and its institutions. He may speak or pray or testify or merely be present. He may busy himself with the activities of the church. What about this? Will profession satisfy?

I fear that professions will not do either. Jesus said that saying "Lord! Lord!" piously didn't mean an open gate

to heaven. Its gates do not open that easily. One of the greatest difficulties God's prophets had to face was the professional prophet who, time after time, so nearly convinced men that he was the true prophet, and God's true prophets false, that the latter were well-nigh rejected and cursed as enemies of God. There are professions that are real—multitudes of them—prayers that are real; testimonies that are real; advocacies of great causes which are real; public proclamations of faith and discipleship which are beyond questioning. But it is the reality that makes the profession, not the profession that makes the reality.

What About Activity?

Surely, if anyone is willing to work unselfishly, sacrificially, for a cause, that is proof enough of his Christian character. But, again, Jesus says that even work is not proof that a man is a Christian. The best worker is not necessarily the best Christian. Even using the name of our Lord, even succeeding wonderfully in work in his name, is not proof of discipleship. How disappointing it will be when the folks who have held oyster suppers and managed bazaars and preached wonderfully eloquent sermons and built great reputations and established flourishing institutions hear him say, to their surprise, that, despite all these things they have done and for which they claimed his authority, he had never known them as Christians! Really they were only borrowing his great name to use it for their own selfish purposes, for their own promotion, for their own recognition and advancement. God is not nearly so interested in all these activities we are carrying on in his name as in the motive, the spirit, in which we are engaging in them.

None of these suggested centers for Christian living will do. Is there any other?

Perhaps our difficulty is that we have been thinking *what* rather than *who*. We are still thinking *"What* is a *Christian?"* rather than "What is *Christianity?"*

What Is Christianity?

Is it a belief? or a way of thinking? Is it conduct? Is

it ritual? observances to be practiced? Is it joining something? belonging to something? What is Christianity?

Christianity is certainly none of these, though each and all may be Christian. Christianity is not a code but a life. It is a living something. Just as an apple is something more than pulp and seeds and skin, or a flower more than petals and stamens and fragrance, so a Christian is more than his beliefs, his conduct, his character, his devotions, his deeds. Just as the apple is what it is because it gathers up and realizes in itself the life that is in the roots and the tree trunk, in the branches and the leaves, so a Christian is the realization of that wonderful life which is continually expressing itself through creeds and rituals and church architecture and congregations and organizations and activities that we rightfully call Christian. The Christian is the fruit on this wonderful tree—one who realizes in his own life the wonderful life that produces him. We might be mistaken about the looks of an apple tree or the claims of the nurseryman who sold us the tree; but when we see and taste the apples it bears, then we know what the inner life of the tree really is. We are frequently mistaken about folks by taking appearances or professions or activity for proof; but every one of these is external. They have about the same relation to life that Christmas candles and tinsel stars have to Christmas trees as trees. Don't judge a tree by the presents it carries on Christmas morning; look for its cones. They are the real tests, for they are its fruits. No one is a Christian whose inner, controlling nature is not Christ's. It is this that makes a Christian.

1 John 3. 10-24

The Certainty of a Living Fact

We never can mistake a living fact. Dead facts are sometimes perplexing, because we cannot see them as they were when they were alive. Some years ago a group of scientists did a clever thing in restoring a gigantic extinct animal from merely a few bones of it which had been discovered. It seemed to be marvelously well done. The papers were filled with the pictures of this wonderful beast, which had once lived on the earth. Other scientists came long dis-

tances to see and to praise their handiwork. Learned societies discussed it and honored their names by congratulatory resolutions. Then somebody was unkind enough to uncover a complete skeleton of this identical animal—and no one has heard of these scientists since, for the real animal didn't resemble the thing they had constructed at all! They merely had mistaken a dead fact—that was all. You may mistake a Christian who is dead, whose Christianity has become extinct, but never a living Christian.

How to Recognize a Christian

The surest test a chemist has for the presence of any certain chemical element is its known reactions. All he needs to discover its presence is to detect its characteristic behavior in the presence of other elements. The surest test of a real Christian is his reaction to right and wrong. Every Christian will make mistakes. That is because he is human. Every one of us will sometimes choose the wrong rather than the right, but the real Christian will not make such a choice willfully or habitually. He will not knowingly go on doing the wrong thing. The "children of the devil," as John calls them, will. This is the real difference between Christians and others.

This difference goes back to the reason why there is wrong in this world. There is wrong because there are men in this world who want their own way rather than God's way. The great, unchangeable law governing that marvelous inner world of the mind and the heart and the will, as gravitation rules the mass of the earth's stuff, is the will of God. If that will had its perfect way, as the laws of the universe have their way, everything would move with as marvelous a harmony as those planets circling through space. But there is only one will in the outer universe. In this mysterious inner world of our hearts God has permitted other wills besides his own—our wills. God wants to bring all these wills of ours into harmony with his will, but he will not compel it. That harmony, whenever it comes, will be a partnership, not a dictatorship. God is looking for sons, not slaves. The reason his conquest of the world moves so slowly is not because of the accidental

wrong choices, the mistaken decisions, the momentary yielding to wrong, we know so well; the real hindrance is in the stubborn, determined purpose of so many folks, even after two thousand years of Christianity, to choose their own way rather than God's way, to do the wrong thing rather than the right.

2 John

The Rule of Brotherly Love

God intended this world to be a wonderful harmony instead of the quarreling, selfish, contending world it is.

Love is the world's law of harmony. Hate, its discord, is simply the disobedience of this law of love. Wherever you discover hate in any of its forms—pride, contempt, unkindness, cruelty, injustice, injury—there you may know that the law of love is being disobeyed. But this law of love is simply God's will, just as every law in this universe is just God's will. Love is the great governing law of our inner world because it is the great governing law of the life of God himself. This is why Jesus taught us to call God Father rather than King. This is why Jesus himself came down to this earth. This is why there was ever a cross. And this is why we may go unhesitatingly to God our Father with every need, every problem. God is a loving God, a kind God, a tender-hearted God, a helping God, because love governs his life. Wherever you find hate you may know that God is not there. Whenever any life is habitually obedient to the law of hate instead of the law of love, that life is not Christian.

Living a loving life, then, is just living God's life, is simply living obedient to the great law of his world. Whenever a majority of the folks in this world obey this law, the great brotherhood of love God intends will begin to appear. The secret of any real international brotherhood is not common interest—all the workers of this world together, all the rulers of this world together; it is just common obedience to God's law of love: for then every life will be in harmony with every other life, as surely as the strings of the piano are in harmony with each other, because we will all be attuned to him.

James 1. 22-27

Loving That Is Real

Isn't it strange that even the best things in this world are counterfeited? There is so much jewelry that is not really gold at all but only brass plated with gold. There are so many flashing "diamonds" that really are paste or glass. There is so much wool that really is shoddy. Folks are always imitating the real thing with the cheaper thing.

It is not difficult to find a reason for this. Reality costs. That is the reason for every imitation, even the imitation of love. Real love costs—costs deeds, costs denials, costs unselfishness, costs sacrifices. Imitations pass so readily for the real and cost so much less. Sometimes the imitation is in words. They sound just as convincing as the speech of genuine love but they are not real. Sometimes the imitation is deeds that are not really sincere at all, merely pretense, yet they appear as sincere as the deeds of real love. Counterfeits merely!

The only love that is worth having, that is worth living, is honestly real love. The person whom we finally cheat whenever we use imitations is never the one we seek to deceive; it is ourselves. The thing that really matters in living is not what we may appear to be as others see us; it is what we actually are to ourselves and to God. If we are not really Christians to ourselves, then we know that we are not Christians anywhere.

How to Be Sure of Yourself

It is not always easy to be really sure about ourselves. These tricky hearts of ours deceive us many times. There are things we wish to do, honestly intend doing,—and we don't do them. There are things we vow by all that is holy we will never do—then we go out and do these very things immediately. Why, even we ourselves are sometimes puzzled to explain. These strange and apparently unwilled sins startle us. They even raise a doubt whether we have a right to call ourselves Christians.

Were *you* ever doubtful in this way about yourself? Would you like to know how to be really sure about yourself?

God has given every one of us a marvelous instrument we popularly call our heart. No instrument man ever devised was quite so sensitive. There are gauges now made which will measure the ten-thousandth of an inch. There are scales that will weigh the very weight of your name written upon a piece of paper. There are machines that will turn out screws so small that men need a microscope properly to insert them. But the heart is a thousand times more sensitive than these. It will tell you the most delicate differences between right and wrong.

Try your heart on these two rules—right doing and right feeling. What does your heart register? Condemnation? approval? If your heart registers condemnation, John says, then you may be sure that God, who is infinitely more sensitive to wrong than any human heart ever could be, condemns us also, for he knows that which we are only able to surmise. If your heart tells you that you are obeying him in the spirit as well as the letter of his commands of right doing, then you may be sure you *are* a Christian.

Love That Gets Into Life

This modern world hardly knows what love really is. We think of it as a sentimental affection. We trifle with it as if it were ephemeral. We joke about it as if it were a foolish thing. We make it the butt of humor and discredit it by our raillery, but the thing we are treating this way is not love—*Love!*

Love is a mother watching over her little babe, caring for it, cradling it in her arms, wakeful to its slightest cry, praying over it, following that child out into life as far as God gives her life, even to her last breath. That's *Love!*

Love is a soldier going back into "No Man's Land" after the raid to find his buddy; going back when the flares and searchlights make the field as light as day, where merely to be is to invite death,—going back because his chum is wounded, perhaps dead, because at the risk of his own life he is willing to try to bring him in. That's *Love!*

Love is a Christian living God's life of love every day: bridling his tongue when it would be easy to say harsh, bitter things; feeling toward others, even toward his enemies, as God himself would feel; living sincerely, striving to

overcome his faults, trusting God where he cannot see, willing to put everything he has and is into God's hand, willing to put the mark of the cross upon every ambition and desire he knows. That's *Love!* This man is real. He *is* a Christian.

The Man Who Is Changed

The Christian is a man who is changed. Something is in his life which makes that life different from that which it would be but for this something. Hawthorne, in his story of "The Great Stone Face," tells how the mere beholding, day by day, year after year, of that great mountain profile which overlooks a certain valley in the White Mountains changed the face of the boy Ernest, who lived in that valley, into its own likeness, until at last the valley folk, looking at Ernest, saw the likeness themselves and found in him the one they were expecting. The Christian is a man who has looked upon the mountain and has been changed by what he has seen. The doer of God's will will be a changed man because insensibly yet surely his steadfast holding of his life to the will of God will bring him to the likeness of God.

There are two processes at work in the Christian's life, one supernatural, the other natural. Within the soul the mighty transforming power of the abiding God is making life over in its inmost nature. There the miracle of salvation changes the sinful into the righteous. There the present Spirit is making it possible for this human life to bear the fruit of the life of God. In the outer, visible life the steadfast obedience of the human will, yielded at the slightest prompting of the sensitive heart, holds the Christian to the great and majestic life of God. It must follow that the life in which these processes are at work will be a changed life—changed visibly, changed vitally, into the likeness of the One we serve. It is this that Paul intends when he writes his own striking description of what it means to him to be a Christian: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

Who are Christians? Those of us in whom the Lord Christ is living daily, entering in at our opening of the door, abiding through our continual obedience, ruling in us

by the yielding of our own wills, manifest in us by the character of our deeds and life.

Guideposts and Question Marks

Is Matthew's suggested test of "fruits" practical in finding out who is a Christian?

What things would you name as "fruits" in such a test?

Should men have credit for the good they do from selfish purposes?

Can we be Christians unless we love our fellow men? Is the man who loves God alone a real Christian?

What proofs of this kind of love does John give in his discussion of it?

Is it possible to love our fellow man in this way? What practical difficulties do you see in the way?

Would there be any difference in this world if men actually obeyed this law of love? What difference would it make in your neighborhood?

Why do we Christians talk so much about love and live it so little?

Is the human heart a reliable instrument for knowing whether any certain thing is right or wrong? whether we are doing right or wrong? Can it be tampered with?

Why should we obey God's law of love? What would happen if, in our Christian living, we obeyed his other laws (such as the Ten Commandments) and neglected this?

Is there any real satisfaction in doing right at a loss when we might profit by doing wrong? What is the real reward for doing right?

What suggestions have you as to how we can make our love for God practical instead of merely sentimental?

CHAPTER II

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

How Does Anyone Become a Christian?

This should be an easy question to answer, but it is not. We have known so many persons who are Christians. Many of us are Christians ourselves. Surely, with all this personal knowledge, we ought to know how anyone becomes a Christian. But do we?

Most of us grew up within the church. Our names were placed on the Cradle Roll shortly after we were born. Some Children's Day, perhaps, our parents brought us to the altar of the church for baptism, or, solemnly, sincerely, we ourselves took the vows of this holy rite. Many of us cannot remember a time when the church was not a part of our lives, when we did not believe in God, pray to God, reverence him.

We are not heathen—those of us who have not yet confessed him. We go to church and respect it. We believe in God. We hold Christianity in respect and would be among the first to defend it were anyone to speak lightly, scoffingly, concerning it; yet we ourselves are not Christians—not all of us.

What is the difference between those of us who have become Christians and those who have not? We belong to the same crowd. We read the same books. We share the same ambitions and ideals. We live about the same kind of lives. Now that we think of it, honestly, what difference is there between us—between those who are Christians and those who are not?

The question puzzles Christians as surely as it puzzled a certain young Jew in a great American university who asked this same question of a Christian friend. He said: "So far as I can see, you and I live practically alike; yet I am a Jew, and you are a Christian. We have about the same code of morals. We both believe in God. I have read

your Bible and, aside from what your New Testament teaches about your Jesus, so far as I am able to judge, our religions are practically the same. What is the difference between us?"

Could *you* have answered that young Jew?

What, really, is the invisible line that divides the folks who are Christians from those who are not, and how do you cross from one side to the other? How does one become a Christian?

Traditionally we know how this is done. To become a Christian it is necessary to give your heart to God; it is necessary to accept Jesus Christ; it is necessary to be converted, to be "saved."

Yes, but what do we mean by these phrases? We use them glibly, but what do they really mean? What is it to give your heart to God? How do you do this? How do you accept Jesus Christ? How is anyone converted? What does it mean to be "saved"?

The externals of the process are familiar to practically every one of us. To be converted it is necessary to go forward to an altar, or walk down an aisle and give your hand to an evangelist, or stand or lift your hand upon the invitation so to declare your new allegiance to Jesus Christ. Possibly there is not one of us who is not perfectly acquainted with these visible details of the process of becoming a Christian. We have witnessed them many times.

But what is it that occurs which the onlooker never can see, which only the person himself can know? Has anything happened in the life itself? If so, what is it that has happened?

A Mystery We Fear

Most of us, were we to be strictly honest, were we frankly to confess what we do think and feel, would be compelled to answer that we are just a bit afraid of this mysterious thing of becoming a Christian.

Although we have heard about God, and read about God, and thought about God, and prayed to God all our lives, we are timid about coming so close to him as this. We can sympathize with the little boy who was "skeered of the angels" when he was alone in the dark. Even an-

gels are a bit fearsome—in the dark. And even God, for all we know of him, awes and affrights us when we come so near to him as this.

There is a lurking feeling, also, that becoming a Christian is a sentimental affair; and how afraid we are of everything sentimental—if it is religious! It does stir the emotions when we are urged to give our hearts to God, and we do not wish them stirred. Ofttimes we are ashamed that our natures are so responsive and inclined to criticize sharply those who have raised the question with us. Secretly we are a little contemptuous toward a decision of this character. If it were necessary to become a martyr in order to be a Christian, that would be different. If it were some heroic, difficult thing that was asked, some great sacrifice, something others were afraid to do, then becoming a Christian would challenge us, as war, danger, and adventure challenge the heroic and the manly in us. Honestly, many are afraid to become Christians simply for fear that others will laugh at them and their religion, and they would rather go to their graves without God than suffer the jibes and sneers of their friends and associates.

There is an uncomfortable feeling about this business of becoming a Christian that it is a serious matter. If it means anything—and we would have nothing whatever to do with it if it did not mean something—it will mean that we shall be compelled to give up several things in order to become a Christian. Just what all these things are, we do not know. Few of those who fear their sacrifice can enumerate them, but they are sure that they are many and great, and the surrender of them difficult.

Christianity seems such a sober, solemn thing that to contemplate accepting it seems to some like blotting out of all the joy of life. True, the Christians we know are very few of them long-faced. They seem to enjoy life with the rest of us. Did you ever attend a summer institute? Do you remember what a good time everyone had? Even the preachers who were present seemed to think nothing of having as much fun as the rest. As you think of these institutes you do not recall a dull minute, and there is still a lingering regret that they had to come to an end. And the preachers were religious, were they not? And those

meetings under the trees, by the lake, in the grove—how solemn they were! Yet they were not dull at all. Somehow God seemed so close that you felt he was there right in the crowd with you, and 'way down in the heart of you, you were glad that *you* were there, and that *he* was there! And you were not afraid of him there at all.

Years ago a group of college men from the Middle West met for conference beside one of the most beautiful lakes in America. They were just boys turned loose from school. How they frolicked in the lake! What stunts they pulled off! That grove rang with their college yells. There were speakers there, young men and old, lawyers and college presidents, and great merchants and teachers—yes, and preachers. One of these was glorious, lovable Maltbie D. Babcock, of Baltimore. Somehow those other preachers had been unable to reach these college boys; but the afternoon Babcock arrived, a baseball game was on, and Babcock had been a famous college pitcher in his day. That afternoon he went into the box and pitched a winning game! Somehow, the next morning, the pitcher in flannels kept intruding while Babcock the preacher spoke, and those young hearts responded when a preacher-pitcher talked about Him as if he belonged to the team!

We are not afraid of Christ when we really meet him. It is just the strangeness of approaching him which bothers us and makes us afraid.

God's Case Book—the Bible

The lawyer has his case books, with their innumerable records of every imaginable case in law. When he wishes to know what the law is in a certain case he must try he searches his case books for light from actual legal proceedings in similar situations. The young physician has his case books also—the records of actual cases similar to the one that is puzzling him—and from experiences so recorded he learns what he must do. God has his case Book also—the Bible. If you wish to know anything about God and man, or man and God, you will find it in the Book—not theology, not theory, but the actual records of human experience with God, of God's dealing with men. What has

this Book to tell us about our question as to how anyone becomes a Christian?

Luke 19. 1-10

THE UNPOPULAR MAN WHO ONLY NEEDED A FRIEND

Had you asked any man in Jericho, in our Lord's time, who the most unpopular man was in that city, it would not have been necessary for him to spend any time weighing the matter. He would have replied instantly, "That mean old thief Zacchæus!" And Jericho would have cast a unanimous vote to sustain his verdict.

If you wish to make yourself unpopular permit folks to think that you have taken something that is rightfully theirs! Zacchæus was a tax agent—possibly the chief for that city. A tax agent was about as unpopular in those days as a revenue officer is to-day among moonshiners. That town hated this man. There wasn't a home in that city where he was welcome. He had not a friend. They called him a thief, a robber, an extortioner, and Cæsar's dog! They spat upon the ground after they had spoken his name, as if its very sound were pollution.

There is nothing so effectual in keeping anybody from being good as the opposition and hatred of good people. Zacchæus must have hated the synagogue crowd as fervently as they hated him. I fancy their taxes were never lessened for that hatred between the tax agent and themselves. What sweet vengeance for all their slights and taunts, their contempt and abuse, to gouge and wring and extract the last penny permitted by the law from these righteous folk who hated and despised him because he was a sinner!

And the man actually wanted to be good, was pitifully eager to do right; and no one would believe it till Jesus came.

What a scene this is! Jesus, the Son of God, selecting the worst man in town to be his host! It shocked the synagogue. It shamed all the good folks who had been loudest in their abuse of this fellow. But Zacchæus the despised had found a Friend at last—and such a Friend! That was all Zacchæus needed to become a Christian—to

discover that Jesus was his Friend. The whole heart of the man went out to this kind, sympathetic Stranger. What happened? He found that God was his Friend. He wanted to be what his Friend was and expected him to be. Zacchæus had to live up to Jesus. And the power of it was that Jesus was his Friend.

All that some of us need to do to become Christians is just to make this same discovery—that Jesus wants to be our Friend. It doesn't matter how others may criticize and judge us, may rebuke and shun us: he wants to be our Friend. He will be if we will permit him, but we shall face the necessity of living up to our Friend. The wonderful thing about it is that his friendship will help us to live up to him.

John 1. 35-39

THE MEN WHO ONLY NEEDED TO SEE HIM

It is a wonderful day when a great hope comes true. A boy, or girl, dreams of going to college. It may be years away. He is only in grammar school, possibly in high school. He pores over the catalogues of various institutions. He follows the record of the athletic teams or worships in bashful admiration the students as they come back for their vacations. Slowly the years wear away, and then, on a wonderful day, that boy or girl actually sets foot upon the college campus! There are the buildings, the gymnasium, the athletic field, the old elms, the "fence," the "yard," the "spring," as they have been ofttimes described. It has come true at last! This is college!

It was so that day in Bethabara. That was what happened when John of the wilderness pointed to the Passer-by and excitedly exclaimed to the young fisherman John and to Andrew, "There he is—the Messiah!"

We can scarcely understand what those words meant to a Jew. The greatest hope the Jew knew was this—that the day would come when a God-King would at last bring deliverance from the yoke of the oppressor. How long had been the oppression! Jewish pride had been humbled in the dust by the haughty, scornful Roman. Bitter was that alien, heathen rule. It must have been like those long,

bitter years of Belgium under the German yoke—hoping for a day of deliverance that seemed so long in the coming. Oppressor had succeeded oppressor, conqueror had followed conqueror, until Jewish pride had been humbled in complete abasement to irresistible power; but the Jew still hoped, and his very existence was in this hope that Messias would come.

And the young Man in white passing yonder, just a handbreath away, is he. Messias has come! This one is Messias—the Deliverer sent by Jehovah. Those young men, scarcely believing the whispered word of the Baptist in their ears, at his passing strain their eyes after him. This day the hope of the Jew has come true. Messias is here! And John and Andrew have looked upon him with their own eyes.

They did not need to go to the village teacher to find out about him. All their lives they had heard about him, had believed in him, had expected him to come! All they needed was to see him. In one of Harry Lauder's songs the young, homesick Scotch lover is singing about Maggie, his sweetheart overseas. He pictures the "wee hoose" where she lives, the familiar scenes so dear and so far away; but it is her sweet face he is seeing most clearly as he sings. His parting word is that "you only need to see her to love her." I like to think that as those young fishermen looked on Jesus that day, Messias though he was, it was not his glory or his power or his destiny that impressed them most; it must have been the Man himself. They only needed to see him to love him.

The finest thing in the story of that first encounter between Jesus and the world he had come to save was that he was the kind of a Messiah that even a fisherman might dare to follow. How timid you and I grow in the presence of the near great! Littleness re-enforces its own conscious smallness by buttressing pomp and assumed greatness. The real great never need to advertise the fact; it is apparent. Jesus, the Messiah, is so approachable, so unforbidding, that even these young fishermen were not afraid to follow him—at a distance. They were invited to go home with him, and went. Could the actual scene itself have given us a better picture of our Lord than these

words? We do not need the Bible to tell us what happened; we know.

All that some of us need is just to see him, to be told who and where he is, and we will follow him.

All our lives we have heard about Jesus Christ, learned about him, expected that some day we too would find him. Really, it doesn't matter much how you find him so that you *find* him. A little boy listens one Sunday night to the preacher as earnestly he pleads with men to give themselves to God. At the close of the sermon, rising from the pulpit platform where he has been sitting with some other boys, because the room is crowded, he walks around in front of the chancel and gives that preacher his boyish hand. That is all, but the boy has found him. A girl feels her heart stir with unutterable desire to give her life to Christ. No sooner is the invitation given than she is down the aisle and kneeling at the altar, and, before anyone can speak to her, it is all done—she has found him. A college youth is walking thoughtfully home from a great convention hour. He is impressed that he ought to give his life to Christ, that he ought to settle the question that very night. He trembles as he thinks of it. It is so strange, so momentous, so difficult. His heart almost fails him. Suddenly, with his cane, he draws a line across the gravel walk. If he crosses that line, the decision is made. If he walks around it, he refuses to make it. With a prayer to God for help, and a bound, he is over the line—and finds him!

Don't you see how it is? Following Jesus, accepting his invitation, abiding with him, *is* finding him, *is* becoming a Christian.

John 1. 40-51

God Caught Men

Jesus did not need the help of others when fishing for men. He was the great master Fisherman. As his unerring eye discerned the comings and goings of the finny folk his friends vainly sought with their nets in Galilee's waters, so he knew the ways of the human heart; he only needed to cast, and men were his. Simon, Philip, and Nathanael were God-caught men.

Our Lord is still taking men alive. Somewhere, some

time, every human being will know that he calls—calls us personally to follow him. It is strange, this unescapable conviction that God wants our lives. It is not possible to put it into words, to describe it, to analyze it; all we know is that deeper than our inmost being, sweeter than any impulse earth knows besides, is this—the urge in our heart toward God. It is still with this heart to say aye or nay to God, to follow or to turn away; but no one has ever yielded to this urging and failed to find him—not one. Sometimes, as with Peter, an Andrew must bring us the message from our Lord. Sometimes, without a single word or appeal, the thought is in our heart. How it came there we do not know; we only know that, like the homing instinct of the bird, there is an impulse in our soul which leads home to God.

The Man Who Must Be Convinced

Not everyone who hears about Jesus accepts him in that very moment. Life is strangely varied in its elements: There are souls as simple in their responses as those of little children; there are others who are exceedingly complex and difficult. Nathanael was one of the latter. He believed in Messias, but not in Nazareth. He expected the Deliverer, but from another quarter. Prejudices are strange things—never stranger than community prejudices, neighborhood prejudices. The Bostonian laughs at Chelsea, and the San Franciscan at Los Angeles. Seattle has its fling at Tacoma, and Kalamazoo at Battle Creek. A Nazareth Messias negatives the truth of the Christ for Nathanael.

There are some of us like him: We wish to be Christians, but not after the Nazareth way. We object to altars or personal workers, to immersion or sprinkling; we are willing to be confirmed but not converted, or converted but not confirmed. Prejudices make queer jumbles of logic.

Wise Philip! You cannot argue down a prejudice: it has no rational foundation. "Come and see!" Jesus is his own best answer. He is the best answer to-day to all our little quibbles and contentions and objections about *how* we are to become Christians. The thing that really matters is not *how* but *whether*. We do not quibble when

fortune waits or pleasure beckons. We choose the short cut, the nearest way. It really doesn't matter which way you follow if you find him. Take the one nearest to you if you can without sacrifice of conviction. Choose the way of your father, of your mother, in which you were reared; but find him.

Acts 9. 1-22

The Enemy God Made His Friend

We moderns are just a bit fearful of the Damascus way, but our fathers of the saddlebag, circuit-riding, and camp-meeting days shouted "Hallelujah!" when they read its story. Just because most of us come very quietly, with restrained feelings, to the holy hour of conversion is no reason for arguing that God cannot save a man by a cataclysm if he wills to do so, and the man requires it. We have grown so fearful of emotionalism that we even question the reality of emotional experience. That is neither open-minded nor wise.

It takes earthquakes and riven skies to grip some men for God. Saul was such a one. There was a battle in this man's life long before Damascus. He was profoundly aware of the evidences on the side of Jesus' claim, but his head pronounced them false. Saul is Nathanael raised to the n-th power. It is not only Nazareth that puzzles him: it is Jesus himself—his poverty, his meekness, his very message, his death. All these the head declared to be impossible for the true Messiah; but Saul had a heart as well as a head—and, if we may believe the chance hints in the record, his heart pronounced in favor of Christ.

This man would either make Christianity or break it. He was one born to destiny. Saul, had he failed to become Paul, would as certainly have proved himself a world man. It was in his horoscope, which is only another way of saying the world was in his vision and his will.

Nothing would suffice this man but the vision of Christ. Now no man could say to him, as Philip to Nathanael, "Come and see"; for ascension was past. Great needs call for great powers. It was now or never with Saul. The Damascus experience was inevitable. Great contentions

with God cost great battles for victory. It is the man who has fought God the hardest and overridden his will most completely who experiences the most vivid conversion.

One thing we know: The experience of the highway profoundly influenced a man and a world. Paul always included his experience with Christ among the resurrection appearances of our Lord. There is no doubt that this life was changed. Paul knew! And his knowledge was not theology nor philosophy; it was experience.

Perhaps the very vividness of such experiences proves their peril to many of us. If you have never been on the Damascus highway, it is so easy to question, when you hear another tell of it, whether you are a Christian at all. Experiences like these are so overwhelming, leave so little to question, that many of us who have found Christ otherwise are troubled by the apparent lack of any like confirmation of our faith. Read carefully the ways in which the followers of our Lord found him and note their variety in means and method. This will steady us.

The heart of Christian experience, after all, is not *how* but *what*. Too many Nathanaels and Simons and Andrews try to have Saul experiences. You can't—but you can have the positive experience, which, after all, is the vital thing in this story. Don't wait for God to prove by an earthquake that he has saved you; take the word of the earthquake Maker. Ananias could tell Paul what it all meant, but Ananias never had gone blind on the way to God. God can save men with a stillness like the dawn and he can waken them with the voice of thunder. Don't try to become a Christian some other man's way; let God bring you by your own way. Either way will find him.

Acts 16. 22-34

What We Must Do Ourselves

Doubtless, after all this discussion, someone would like to inquire, "But isn't there something I must do myself in order to become a Christian?" If I become a soldier I must swear my allegiance. Before I may practice as a physician or lawyer I must qualify by study. If I become a mechanic I must serve as an apprentice. All we have

discussed has concerned what God must do, but what must *I* do?

This is what the jailer of Philippi asked. What an experience for a man who wasn't interested in religion at all! A faithful, plodding fellow, a good jailer, he was, but that was all. He locked up the greatest personality of power in the world of his time as unconcernedly as he would have turned the key upon a chicken thief. The truth or falsity of Paul's religion didn't concern him. He was only a jailer!

But earthquakes, and shaken prison walls, and open doors, and yawning cells, and broken stocks, and snapped fetters, and escaping prisoners concern this jailer mightily. This man, who was indifferent to religion, suddenly became concerned about the supernatural, because the supernatural had suddenly become the supreme problem for this man's life. In the jailer's philosophy there was only one cure for the things that were happening that night in the old prison in Philippi: a good jailer dies when he fails as a jailer! But the miracle of escape from the disgrace of failure and the shame of lost prisoners plunges him into a greater danger still: he has fallen into the hands of God. He is in the grasp of the Almighty! And the man trembles at the thought. To fail in his duty to Rome as a jailer meant death, but to fall into God's hands is more perilous than to anger Rome. This God is an unknown God. He is not the God of the jailer's fathers. His ways are mysteries, but they are mightily convincing when they shake prisons. The only persons the jailer knows who can tell him about this fearful God are these men in the prison stocks who are even now bruised and bleeding from his own blows. What if they refuse to tell? The thought never entered the jailer's mind. Intuition strangely shortens thinking processes. These men, who know this God, will tell.

"What must I do to be saved?"

What must I do to become a Christian?

There is only one human power that can bridge the gap between a heart and God. Knowledge cannot do it. Works cannot do it. Philanthropy cannot do it. Honesty and debt-paying and truth-telling cannot do it. Faith is the

only power man possesses which can actually establish connection between man and God. Faith is not some mysterious, other-world something. It is the most familiar fact of every day. When you snap the button that turns on the electricity in your room, do you expect light? That is faith. When you take a street car for downtown do you expect it to carry you to your destination? Faith! When you receive a check made payable to you personally do you question whether it is good, whether it can be cashed? No? Then that is faith. When God says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," what do we do? If we do as a little child, as we ourselves do with the push button, the street car, and the check, we take him at his word. This is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ to salvation.

How faith does this, I do not know; I only know that it does. I do not know how electricity travels over a wire; I only know it does. I do not know how the light of the sun traverses the leagues of space to warm my dooryard; I only know that it does. How taking God at his simple word can change the intellectual apprehension of God into a living experience of him, I do not know; I only know that, through all ages since Jesus taught man this was a possible human experience, this wondrous comradeship with a living Friend has been the privilege not of rare individuals here and there, mystics and prophets and seers, but of any human being willing to seek it.

The heart of this matter of becoming a Christian is this —a simple, childlike faith that believes that God wants our lives for himself and will enter into them and make them his own; which permits him to come in. That is how Andrew and John found him; and Peter, and Nathanael, and Paul, and the jailer at Philippi. That, too, is the way you will find him.

Guideposts and Question Marks

Why should it be difficult to explain how anyone becomes a Christian?

Are the various conventional things we do in becoming a Christian necessary or merely the way in which we realize the deep longing to find God?

Would it be possible to abolish all these conventional ways of accepting Christ? Would it be wise? Why not?

Why should anyone be afraid of conversion?

Is it really the sacrifice we think we must make in becoming a Christian which keeps us from it, or is this merely camouflage?

Is it a sign of weakness to feel a need for God?

Ought we to regard Christian decision as a serious matter? Why?

Why did Zacchæus need to wait until Jesus came to Jericho in order to find God?

Why did John and Andrew believe John the Baptist when he pointed out Jesus as Messiah?

Why did Andrew seek his own brother, Peter, first?

Why did Nathanael doubt, and what was it that he doubted?

Why was God so determined to win Paul?

What was it that convinced the jailer of Philippi that he ought to be saved?

What is the really important matter in becoming a Christian?

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN'S CREED

Must I Have a Creed?

A CREED is about the last thing in which the average person is interested. Really, most of us have a hazy idea as to what a creed actually is. Whenever we hear the word mentioned we think of something dry and controversial and theoretical and theological—and are not interested at all. Of course we know that creeds are necessary, just as constitutions are necessary, and characters are necessary, and budgets are necessary, and skeletons are necessary; but their necessity doesn't make them interesting. Doubtless there are folks in this world who are interested in creeds, just as there are folks who are interested in bones and fossils; but we are not.

Youth is interested in going things and growing things. We like living folks better than mummies. We prefer a garden to a herbarium. A zoo is vastly more entertaining than a museum. That is because of the infinite variety and change we find in life, and it is life in which we are supremely interested.

As men grow older, however, they begin to see that what we believe matters very much indeed. The difference between what Germany believed and what the allies believed made one the peril of the world and the other its safety. The vast difference between a pagan and a Christian land is not wholly a matter of the respective degrees of their civilization, their education; it goes back to the difference in their beliefs. It is possible for a mistaken belief to be conscientious; it is possible for a sincere belief to be dangerous. Mohammed's mistaken belief has deluged the world with Christian blood through the centuries. It was belief in witches which crowned Gallows Hill in old Salem with shameful gibbets, whereon innocent men and women died. The mistaken beliefs of Dowie and Russell and San-

born and Mrs. Eddy have deceived many and changed thousands of lives. It matters much what we believe.

John 3. 16

The Simplest Christian Creed

The simplest creed the Christian knows is found in this verse, which someone has named "The Gospel in Miniature" (John 3. 16): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

All the great foundation beliefs of the Christian are in this single verse: the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, the divine affection for this world, the universality of salvation, the freedom of the will, the certainty of faith, the peril of sin, the certainty of immortality. How many of these great beliefs do *you* accept?

A graphic means has recently been devised for picturing a life as it has developed its various possibilities. The fully developed life is a perfect square, with life's great diagonals—the physical, the intellectual, the social, and the spiritual—equal. This is the one-hundred-per-cent perfect life. Most of us fall short of perfection on at least one of the diagonals. Some of us are ninety-per-cent physical and social but only fifty-per-cent intellectual and thirty-per-cent spiritual. Measure such a life on the diagonals of a perfect life, then bound these bizarre, differing values by a single line, and see what a lopsided, absurd life it is. The boy who has looked at such a graph of himself will never forget it. Try your pencil on your own life, estimating the respective proportions in your own living of these four great elements and measuring the degree of each from the center on the diagonals. That's how *you* look. Try the graph on your beliefs. Draw a diagonal for every one of the great beliefs we have just mentioned. Which are your strongest beliefs? Which do you scarcely comprehend at all? How do you look as a believer?

John 7. 17

The Pragmatic Test of a Creed

Professor James, the great philosopher, invented a word

that has had a very popular usage: "pragmatism." It sounds fearfully difficult, doesn't it? But it isn't. Pragmatism is just *"the philosophy of trying it."* If the thing works it's true.

Centuries before Professor James was born, that marvelous young Jew of Nazareth, Jesus, the Son of God, said, in effect: "Don't believe what I have told you merely because I said it; try it. By the experiment you may know for yourself whether or not I am telling you the truth."

Experiment is man's most familiar method of discovering truth. That is the way man found out most of the things he knows. That is how he discovered that iron could be made to float, that electricity can be harnessed, that it is possible to talk over a wire, that a human being can fly. It is not man's belief in these things that sustains his theories; it is the practical fact that man can do them, is doing them.

The greatest field of experiment life knows is life itself, and life's greatest experiments have to do with man's beliefs about God.

Is there a God? Live as if there were a God, says Jesus, and you will know. Does God care what happens to me? Act as if he did care; then prove your result. Can Jesus save me from my sins? Ask Jerry McAuley and his boys down there in Water Street. Ask men who have tried it out and proved it. They know! The greatest credulity in this world is to believe naïvely that man cannot know anything whatever about these things. Our Lord challenges us to put them to the pragmatic test of life.

Acts 10. 34-43

An Epochal Belief

It was upon this great test of experiment that Peter founded the most epochal belief that came to any Jew after the days of Moses—that God belonged to mankind, and not exclusively to the Jew. That belief changed this world. It is basal to Christian history and it rests upon tangible, visible facts. Men who were not Jews, Gentiles, were showing as unmistakable evidences of God in their lives as the children of Abraham. With the visible evi-

dences of the Holy Spirit in Gentile lives the question whether God was concerned about all mankind had ceased to be a problem for discussion. In the test of experiment the truth of that concern was proved—and before the very eyes of the man who had doubted that truth.

The acid test of whatever creed you really believe (I mean not the one you merely affirm but the real beliefs in your heart) is its truth under experiment. If your creed proves true there, it is true. A Christian should be as sure of his beliefs as a chemist or an electrician or an engineer is sure of his.

Acts 16. 31; Rom. 10. 1-15

Belief and Our Lives

Many mighty things depend on this single thing we call belief. Would you receive remission of sins? Believe! Would you be saved? Believe! Would you make sure of your eternal reward? Believe!

Surely this kind of belief is something more than intellectually accepting a thing as true: accepting, for instance, the doctrine of salvation or the doctrine of our Lord's divinity or his Saviourship. Would it not be possible for a man to believe all these intellectually, merely as a rational explanation of great mysteries otherwise inexplicable, yet fail of being a Christian? I answer you, "Yes, he could."

Belief is never tangible until it passes into faith, and faith is simply putting beliefs to the pragmatic test, actually using them in practical life as true!

How hard it is to do this thing—just to go on, fearlessly, in the face of overwhelming difficulty, in sheer faith that God is your helper; just to accept the whole matter of your personal salvation as settled because you have taken Jesus at his word, even though not a thrill of feeling or consciousness of change comes to you! How hard it is to "go over the top" and into battle knowing that thousands will lose their lives, that possibly you yourself may be killed the next step, yet go, never doubting that there is another world beyond this. This is faith! And the marvelous thing about it is that it never fails. Why wonder

that Paul is so positive when he declares, without a single qualification, what will happen if we confess and believe? Paul has reason to make this statement, for it has been his personal experience; this is precisely what Paul himself did. He has proved his theory in the great laboratory of experience. He knows that it is true.

How Faith Helps

The world we live in is a very real world—a world of physical facts, of material substance; rocks, earth, wood, iron, cloth, bread; a world of gravitation, of levers and fulcrums, of physics and mechanics. Food? A matter of agriculture, transportation, and distribution! Education? Just a matter of teaching, of schools and books and study! Success? The answer is in organization of the forces you control, the adaptation of power to the ends you seek, the skillful utilization of every opportunity that offers.

We have a formula for everything. There is a law for everything man is called upon to do, even a system for laying bricks, for carrying hods! We have principles and processes to govern the doing of our work, means for tangibly accounting for its expenditures of force and money, that we may gauge outgoes and incomes. This is our world. But you cannot reduce God's spiritual realm to our little rule of thumb. It too is under law, but not our little laws. It too is subject to principles. We, trying to comprehend the laws and principles of this mighty realm of God, are like midges, that live a night, trying to understand electricity and hydraulics and aëronautics! What observations can a midge make, in a midge's life, which ever will be adequate for such an understanding?

The difference between us and the midge, though, is this: We can choose which realm we will live in—the world of things or the world of spirit; while the midge has no choice as to his world. We are not midges; we are candidates for the life of God. But we are only candidates!

Even God cannot force you to live in his spiritual world unless you choose to live there. Aside from the brain and soul that God has given you, you are merely a first-class animal. Your life as an animal doesn't differ greatly from that of your neighbor the ox. If you wish to be just a good

animal—to feed, to live, to sleep, as an animal—you can be one: God will not prevent you. It is your privilege. He made you for his home; but if you prefer the barnyard, the stock lot, that is your privilege as an animal; and you will not need faith at all. No beast ever needed a creed or had one. Its morals are all automatic. But you cannot be more than a beast, be a moral being, without faith, for this is a thing in the moral realm: it is not in the beast's world. Faith is just trusting the unknown principles and laws and forces in this other realm. You may know only a very little about these, but you know about God. There is not a law nor a principle nor a force in this other realm which is not God's, and you can trust him.

There is a great deal in the world of air which the aviator does not need to know at all in order to fly successfully; he does need to know his machine, how to rise from the ground, how to maintain his balance, and how to trust the unseen principles he recognizes but does not understand. It is not his understanding; it is his trusting that sustains him as he flies. This is faith.

Heb. 11. 6; James 2. 14-26

The Final Test of Faith

Faith has some strange relatives. Credulity is one. Superstition is another. They all have a family resemblance, and sometimes folks find it difficult to distinguish between them. There are critics of Christianity who are sure that what we call a Christian's faith is, in reality, only his credulity, or his superstition. Credulity trusts; superstition believes. But the ever-present test for these is fact—and fact always puts credulity and superstition to shame, but never faith. If faith actually enables us to live in God's realm, it will show Godlike results of that living in the visible world. If you believe in God, then live for him. If you believe in righteousness, then show yourself righteous. You believe that God can forgive sin: then live a forgiven life.

Religion, like invention, must touch the earth. The Government Patent Office, at Washington, has a museum of dreams that men have patented but which never had a

value for an everyday earth. There are men who spend a lifetime inventing perpetual-motion machines which never "mote." There are Christians like them—Christians who live sublimely in the heavenly sphere and forget that there is an earth where families must be provided with food and shelter, where debts must be paid. It matters not how fine, how exalted, your faith may be: Does it touch your life? Is it visible in deeds? Is it at work in the everyday?

The finest experiment in faith, practically, which the world knows is America. America is a practical experiment in the faith of men in democracy. It is one thing to believe in it as a theory; it is another to trust the happiness of a hundred millions of human beings to it as a governmental fact. It was one thing to believe that God had made every human being equal when you had a land where practically all the folks belonged to the same social class and were already equals, and another to apply that theory to a million or so of black folks, who came from savagery and had been slaves of the folks in this land. That was the first great problem that our theory of democracy in America had to face if it was to continue to be more than a theory. It stood the test. And we now face such a problem magnified and multiplied. Can our American faith in democracy as a theory stand the practical test of the mixture of the melting pot? We Americans believe that it can. Can it stand the extension of the theory to industry? To-morrow will tell, but the telling must be as unquestionable as Abraham Lincoln, rail splitter, child of poverty, sitting in the Presidential chair; as when the Negro, born in slavery, stands up a man, with unfettered hands; as that Scotch boy of the steerage becoming the steel master and the owner of millions. Faith in democracy or religion must justify itself by works.

Our world is waiting for our Christian faith in brotherhood to justify itself in deeds; for our faith in world unity, in interracial, interclass love, to prove itself in living. The creed worth having is the creed that you can live, and the creed that can be lived is the creed worth believing.

Guideposts and Question Marks

Must I believe anything in order to be a Christian?

What fundamental beliefs should every Christian have?

Will the kind of beliefs I have determine the kind of a Christian I will be?

Does it matter what I believe, if my intentions are right?

What is the surest test for a belief?

How may I test, practically, my belief that there is a God? that Jesus was God's Son? that anything real happened at Calvary?

What experiments have you ever made with your beliefs? Do you dare put them to the test of practical experiment? If you do not dare this, are they worth having?

If a belief failed in practical experiment, what ought you to do? How may you know whether it really failed?

Is it safe to trust to faith in practical affairs?

How may we know that we are really trusting God, and not merely credulous?

What is the proof that faith accomplishes anything?

Can works ever prove the presence of faith?

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE

Acts 26. 1-20

The Experience That Changed a Life

The most interesting story in the world is a personal experience. Literature began with the stories of such experiences—war, adventure, romance, peril, disaster, tragedy. These are the very warp and woof of prose and poetry. However, it is the real, not the fancied, that holds our attention breathlessly until it is finished.

Even a king must listen to such an experience as this of Paul's. Think of the dramatic setting of its telling. It is a court of law, where a man is pleading for his life. The man pleading there belonged to the inner circle of Judaism's most intolerant religionists. He was once the arch-persecutor of this very faith for which he pleads, with life or death as the outcome of his argument. It is before a king.

A strange field for adventure his story presents—an encounter with the supernatural. This man had looked upon the invisible. How the jaded, ennuied mind of that Oriental monarch quickens to this tale!

It is a dramatic situation—a man pleading for his life. In his every sentence there is a hope, a fear. In every argument there is a possibility of reprieve or sentence of doom. Death presses upon the very words this man utters. Peril marshals his logic to its conclusions.

This man, on trial for his life, is not thinking of saving himself, of justifying himself, or of attempting to disprove the charges against him. First and foremost he is thinking of convincing this sneering, indifferent king of the reality of this, the prisoner's, experience—and that, strange to note, with the hope not only that the judge who is listening to him may believe in the reality of this experience, but that it may become his experience also.

The experience that can turn a persecutor into a propagandist, an adversary into an advocate, a bigot into a brother, so possess a life that the man to whom it belongs becomes indifferent to the great ambitions that have gripped him, is an experience real beyond words.

Such an experience is more than a plea: it is a historical fact that can explain the dynamics of a great life and of a great hour in Christian history.

The Reality in a Christian Life

Is it possible for you to read Paul's statement of his experience without wishing that Christianity might mean as much for you? I cannot. As we read his words, everything seems so real, so convincing; and our Christianity does not always mean that.

I wonder if you have ever felt that everything was so strange about this business of being a Christian that there might be question, after all, as to its reality? You are a Christian, or you expect to be. It is the expected thing in your community, in your circle of friendship. In that circle everybody who is respectable becomes a Christian. The matter of your own relation to Christ is more than a neighborhood custom. You sincerely wish to become a Christian or you became a Christian through such a desire. As you think of it, though, it seems such an intangible thing, such a mysterious thing. Other things do not seem that way when you think about them—business, pleasure, education. These are all tangible enough; but living as a Christian seems, at times, so mysterious, so unreal, that you wonder if the Christian is not deceived by the very mystery into thinking that something has happened in his life when nothing has happened.

These are familiar doubts.

Perhaps you never have met anyone who had an experience like Paul's. Most of the folks whom you know as Christians came into the life quietly, without very much struggle. They had no visions. They heard no voice. Apparently they simply came to an hour when they made up their minds to be Christians and have been ever since.

Possibly when you became a Christian you expected an experience like that of the Damascus highway. You waited

for something wonderful to happen when you gave your heart to God, but no vision came. No voice sounded in your ears, and you were disappointed. Perhaps you even doubted that anything had happened, that you really had a right to call yourself a Christian (there are more Christians than yourself troubled here), because you never had such an experience as this.

What is it that is the reality in a Christian's life, as real as in Paul's?

One thing that is indisputably real is whether or not you yourself are in earnest about this matter of becoming a Christian. There need be no confusion about that. You know whether you want to be a Christian or not? Yes; each of us knows that clearly for himself.

There is another thing equally real. What does God wish you to do about this matter? Does he want you to be a Christian? Can you doubt that he wants you to love him, to accept him, to follow him, to trust him? Can we question that a God desiring such things will do his utmost to help us realize this very desire he cherishes? We need only ask the question to answer it. The one is as clear as the other. These are not strange, unrealizable things; they are as clear and definite as any other thing in our lives. We wish to be Christians. God wishes us to become such, stands ready to help us. If we know what we will to do, and that God is willing, doesn't that settle the matter? Yes, but the experience! What about the experience? you ask.

This *is* the experience!

Sometimes it comes to us like a great joy, sometimes as a great peace, sometimes as a quiet certainty and satisfaction. How it comes depends largely on the way God made us. The wind sighs through the cedars; it howls through the canyon; it whispers in the willows and plucks soft melody from the strings of the æolian harp. The wind is the same; the mediums are different—that is all. A cedar and a willow cannot have the same kind of a wind experience, but each may have its own experience. And so may we. Some of us are harps, some cedars. Some of us are responsive to the least stirring of the emotions, and others of us can go to the most exciting ball game on earth and never

stir from our seats, never utter a sound. Temperament—that's all! If I had to enjoy a ball game after the manner of some folks I have seen I'd stay at home to avoid being ashamed of myself; but that's my way, not theirs. Peter never had James's experience, nor James the experience of John. Saul and Andrew are as far apart as the poles of the earth; but each man knew God, each had an experience of God.

The real experience is your consciousness of God, of the reality of God, of your personal relation to God, however that may realize itself in you. The thing that keeps all clear is the knowledge that, whatever vision God gave you, however the impulse to follow him came to you, you have never been disobedient to that call; that you have done your part. If that is clear, never doubt that God does his part also.

Rom. 5. 1-5

How Experiences Grow

Experiences grow. They grow because they are memory's treasury of the events of life. They are an accumulation of experiences with God; yet they are more, for an organizing principle runs through them all, uniting them into one experience.

If I am a student, I have a student's experience. It began years ago with my first school days, with A B C's, slates, pencils, pen and ink; then followed grammar, arithmetic, algebra, Latin, Greek, philosophy, history. How it grows! But the thing that holds together the experiences of the little child, the grammar grades, and high school and university, is the fact that I am a student. Every other life experience is like that, whether it is that of the mechanic, the teacher, the physician, the lawyer, or the minister. Each of these has his own experience, and what he is ties it together. I am a Christian. My experience began when I first knelt at my mother's knee and learned to pray, first learned to lisp the name of Jesus. That experience has grown vastly since those old, sweet, childhood days. In it is Sunday school, Bible, my conversion, the day I joined the church, my first sorrow, multiplied days of fear, of suffering and pain, of disappointment and failure; yet

through these all runs an organizing principle that makes them one—my experience of God, real even as the reality of Paul's highway. I was obedient to the heavenly vision in joy and sorrow, in success and failure, in hours when God seemed nearest, in others when he seemed farthest. I was obedient. That ties it all together.

Making Experience

Paul's Christian experience began on the highway to Damascus. When Ananias came to him as he sat in darkness, he added something. Preaching, persecution, controversy, suffering, abuse, imprisonment, punishment, attack and arrest, chains, charges, captivity, Rome—all these were the making of an experience. That is the way an experience is made.

Saul the persecutor is not happy. His heart is troubled. Redoubling his devotions as a Pharisee brings no relief. The sterner his opposition to Christianity, the unhappier he is. Then the highway, Jesus, and happiness! What wonder that he wrote, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"? That is the way in which he got it.

Troubles come. Paul loses his friends. He is misunderstood by his brethren and criticized by them; but he is still obedient to the vision, and, obeying, these troublesome things become easier. They teach patience to impulsive, quick-tempered Paul. Experience in the making—that's all.

The past becomes the prophecy of the future. God helped at Damascus; he will help in Philippi. God delivers in Thessalonica; he will deliver in Jerusalem. That is how hope grows out of experience. It is this hope, sustained by love and loyalty, which holds Paul obedient.

Every Christian experience is made in this way. It grows richer, surer, nobler, with every human experience; but it must have a great loyalty at its center. It must have at its heart the fact that a life was given, that the given life was accepted; and then it must live by the fact.

The Problem of Failure

The Christian experience that does not include failure

is not normal. We fail because we are human. The human part of Christian experience is continually our problem. We will to do one thing and end by doing another. We wish to do right and seem powerless to do it. We love God, yet we continually find our lives in captivity to wrong, until it seems as if, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, two natures were struggling in us also.

Don't grow discouraged. Read Paul: he understands. Is your heart right? Are you still obedient in your heart to your vision? Are you still sorry over your failures? Then, the line with God is still unbroken. It is when folks do wrong and cease to be sorry, when folks sin and are unashamed, that the line is broken, our Lord denied, and we ourselves fallen away from God.

Rom. 7. 8

How God Helps Victory

Being good by resolution is a failure because it is wholly human. Turning a leaf may afford an opportunity for betterment, but it cannot itself better us. No man ever saved his own soul. Until God enters it, the story of morality is that of futile battle. Codes cannot reform character. Creeds have no power to cleanse a soul. The moral law is only a convicting witness of our sins. A power must enter into these lives of ours mightier than resolution, more lasting than penitence, if anything is to happen. We need the comradeship of the Almighty. Jesus came to be that Comrade. The testimony of men is that comradeship with Christ is comradeship with limitless power. It was so with Paul. It can be so with us.

2 Cor. 12. 10

The Opportunity of Weakness

The most amazing utterance of Paul is that in 2 Corinthians in which he finds satisfaction in weakness. What a strange satisfaction for one of earth's greatest souls! But Paul is right. He glories in infirmities and distresses, because they are so utterly beyond human power that their very helplessness compels heavenly assistance.

We are always in peril when we think we are sufficient without God. Failure is inevitable. Human resolution and strength and conscience always have their limits. Any moment in life's struggle may find these human powers outdistanced. Depending on them is like depending on your last dollar. When it is gone, you are helpless, bankrupt. Taking God into account is like multiplying the credit of a pauper by the millions of a Rockefeller. No moment in time ever was able to exhaust God. Yet, knowing this to be true, we continually depend on ourselves instead of God. Only the overwhelming fact of helplessness makes our dependence on God certain.

The strange thing about this dependence of man on God is that God expects to depend on us. We are God's comrades, not his almsmen. The experience toward which we move, toward which God leads, is one where man does his best as God does his best. It is this final comradeship of which God dreams, and which is the Christian's goal. When we reach this, no power can overthrow us.

This marvelous possibility is not exceptional. God intends it for every one of us; and it begins with a willing heart, a trusting heart, and an obedient life.

Guideposts and Question Marks

What were the salient features of the highway experience of Paul? Itemize these, that every distinct feature of this experience may be before you.

What do you think impressed Paul himself the most in this experience? (Read the account in Acts 9 and compare with Paul's own description of the experience before Agrippa.)

What characteristic answer did he make? Had Paul's conscience suggested anything he ought to do, but was unwilling to do?

Did Paul make a mistake in instantly making his decision rather than waiting and thinking over his vision?

What is it in a Christian life which gives it reality?

Must every Christian have the same experience? Did the apostles have precisely the same experience?

Do experiences grow or are they fixed for life at our conversion?

Out of what materials is Christian experience made?

What thing in common have sorrows and joys, successes and failures, in Christian living? How can these far separated things be built into the same life?

Should we be discouraged by our failures in Christian living? How can we overcome them? How use them?

Will God help us in our personal struggle? in problems of finance? of ambition?

Why did Paul rejoice in weakness? Where was its joy?

Which is the most perilous in Christian living—strength or weakness?

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE OF PRAYER

Does Anything Happen When You Pray?

The other day a young man asked me very earnestly, "Does anything happen when you pray?" Does it? What do you say? Seriously, now, are we not a bit skeptical about this queer business of prayer? Our mothers taught every one of us to pray when we were little children. Most of us pray still in some fashion; but there is something unreal about it, this talking to God whom you cannot see, who never answers you audibly. There are times when you have prayed, as I have prayed, when it seemed that God *must* speak; and then, when we ceased praying, there was only the blank silence.

For many, many persons prayer, for all they respect it, seems rather a useless practice. They cannot see what others see in it.

Mark 1. 35-38

What One Young Man Thought About Prayer

What young people wish to know is what other young people think about these things. Older folks seem to belong to a different world. They think differently. They feel differently. They have different grounds for their beliefs. That is why youth is so impatient with age. Age never understands the grounds of youth's convictions, youth's feelings, youth's ideas.

What does a young Man of thirty think about this matter of prayer? Not a mystic, not a fanatic, but the sanest, bravest, manliest soul that ever lived upon this planet—what does he think about prayer? Banish the picture of a sad-eyed, bearded, effeminate Christ. That is the Christ of the painters, not the real Christ. The real Jesus is as virile as a "doughboy." He is as sturdy as a soldier. He

is as gentle as a lover. He is as red-blooded as an athlete. He is as normal as a modern college boy. This is the real Christ. What does he think about prayer?

It isn't what youth says which is the best evidence in such a case. Youth is reticent about these sacred, inner heart things. You wouldn't expect Him to talk at length about it; what does he *do* about it?

Jesus is about his lifework at thirty. Its business absorbs him, as yours does you if you have found the right calling. He lives it, dreams it, eats it. It is food and drink to him. He is putting into it every energy he has. Have you ever known such a young man at such a point in his career? He lies awake nights, planning how he can do his work better. He is working on methods, trying this, experimenting with that, working for success. That was just what Jesus was doing.

What is his chief reliance? his surest method?

Prayer! Yes, just this thing you feel to be so unreal, so useless—prayer! If you had asked Jesus he would have told you that prayer was his chief reliance, his most successful method—just prayer!

If Jesus believed that prayer accomplished things, used it to accomplish things, relied upon it, taught his disciples to use it, we must be wrong in thinking that nothing happens when we pray.

Luke 6. 12, 13

How Prayer Helps

Possibly the question in your mind is this: How does prayer help? How did prayer help Jesus in his work? How can it help me?

The business in which Jesus was engaged here on earth was not his own business; it was his Father's. In one of his books Bishop McDowell tells the story of his encounter one day, while traveling, with a young salesman whose father had just taken him into partnership. The boy was full of it. He could scarcely talk about anything else. The wise bishop used the boy's enthusiasm, his fine interest in his father's business, to open the way to conversation about the business of the bishop's Father, God, who had taken him

into partnership also. Jesus was that young Man about the business of God & Son. His Father had sent him out, as the other young man's father had sent him, on the business of the firm.

What would an inexperienced young partner like that do when daily confronted by problems in this business which he absolutely could not solve? I know what I would have done had it been my father's business: I would have sought my father's advice; and that was just what Jesus was doing, night after night, as he prayed: talking over the business with his Father, the Head of the firm.

Can you really, truly, talk with God when you pray?

Jesus did. Multitudes have believed this true through the ages. The Bible holds that this is true.

But how do you know that God hears? All we know is the human side of prayer, the words we speak, the things we feel, the spirit of our prayer. Often there is great earnestness in it. Frequently the urgency of great need is behind it. Surely there is the conscious faith of a needy heart in prayer, believing there is a listening God. But does God hear? This is the startling, disturbing question about prayer. And the ground for the question is the continual silence of the God to whom we pray.

Have you ever talked with your father or mother concerning something in which you were mutually interested and suddenly discovered that, in the heat of your enthusiasm, in your own eagerness to tell them about it, they have never spoken a word? And you were not even aware that they were not taking part in the conversation. As you think of it, there was such an understanding between you, such a communion of spirit, that words could add nothing to that which silence already shared. Your hearts were *en rapport* without speech. God will be like that with you if you will permit it.

Our heavenly Father has chosen to cloak himself in invisibility, to speak to us in those vaster, greater ways than the way of mere speech. Why, we know not; assuredly for our own sakes, not for his own exalting. But he speaks! No one with real need has ever gone to him in vain. No one in doubt has ever asked fruitlessly. He speaks, and prayer is the language in which man speaks to him. It is

our surest, nearest way to God. No one ever knows God well except through prayer.

When Man Must Find God

Most of our praying, when we are young, seems useless because it isn't useful. We are praying because it is a habit, praying because we were taught to pray, praying because we believe that people ought to pray; but there is little urgency of need in our prayer. When need comes, prayer suddenly grows real beyond the power of words to describe. We may have all our doubts and our fears and our questions about prayer still, but we *must* find God! Prayer becomes intensely real at times like these.

Read about Jacob and his struggle by the Jabbok. The background of that night of prayer is the vision of a wronged brother approaching with his soldiers. Read the story of Hezekiah the king and Rabshakeh's letter. Hezekiah simply had to find God. This was the reason why Jesus prayed the whole night through before the day when he chose the Twelve. That was the most crucial night in Christian history. To choose, on the morrow, the wrong men was to fail before this mighty enterprise was even begun. Jesus simply must know what God's will is—and he prays, and prays, and prays till the dawn; then chooses the Twelve. That night prayer meant something to Jesus that it never had meant before. When some great hour of need comes to you, you will find it so.

Luke 11. 1-3

Jesus' Course in Prayer

The greatest Teacher of prayer the world ever knew was our Lord. He was a master of prayer. He knew its theory, its philosophy, its practice. If anyone could teach men how to pray, it would be Jesus.

One day his disciples asked him to open a school of prayer. Every one of these men who wanted to learn about prayer was a praying man, had prayed all his life. Why study prayer after all this? Jesus knew something about prayer which the scribe, the Pharisee, and the priest did

not know. That something which he knew is the heart of Christian prayer. It is just this intimacy of prayer about which we have been talking; this consciousness of talking personally with God instead of mumbling a formula or repeating a string of words.

Andrew Murray, a great student of God, has written a little book I hope each of you will read and own some time: *With Christ in the School of Prayer.* You could spend your lifetime studying prayer and still not exhaust the subject; but in a few sentences Jesus gives us the gist concerning prayer.

God is a Father more than he is anything else, and you can come closer to a father than to anyone else on earth save a mother. You cannot pray, "Our Father," without feeling nearer to God, and that God is nearer to you. Just substitute for those words "Our King," "Our Judge," "Our Jehovah," "Our Creator," and see what a difference they make, how far away they place God; but "Our Father"—this is where the intimacy with God in Christian living begins.

We need this intimacy renewed every day. Have you ever thought that one of the most obvious reasons for the intimacy in the words "father" and "mother" is the fact that we continually see them day by day? When Bishop Thoburn was a young missionary in India his beloved wife died and left a little motherless child. It was necessary for the child to make his home with his grandparents in America, and seven years had passed before his missionary father could return and see his little boy again. The child had heard about his father, had received letters and presents from him, had seen his picture. One day the real father, in flesh and blood, came home from India; but the little son did not know him, was afraid of him. He simply had not known the privilege of daily intimacy with his own father.

This is one of the great reasons for daily prayer—that we may keep the intimacy of a child with our heavenly Father.

Intimacy with the God of the universe needs to be tempered with a profound sense of his vast meaning if that intimacy is not to degenerate into familiarity. A God who is

a tolerated familiar can never be the Christian's God. So Jesus adds: "Our Father who art in heaven."

There is an infinite range of meaning to this phrase. It lifts our intimacy with God to heavenly heights. It makes fatherhood everlasting. Some of us have lost our earthly fathers. We never pronounce that word "father" without a lump in the throat, but "our Father who art in heaven"—we are fatherless no more. God, the everlasting God, is our Father, will be our Father to the end of our days.

Jesus would have men preserve the ineffable sense of the name of God. So holy was the name of the Most High to the Hebrew that he never pronounced the real name of his God. The Christian must have as profound a sense of God's ineffable character. This is why we are taught to pray, "Hallowed be thy name!" Hallow it! Enshrine it! Defend it! Do not permit men in their thoughtlessness and vulgarity to trample that word underfoot, to defile his name by using it in their oaths. The name of our God is a holy name!

Jesus never forgot that Christianity was to be a world business. We simply cannot avoid missions and be Christian. We cannot pray, truly pray, and be provincial. Our God is the God of the whole earth, and the whole earth needs him. In this straitened day we know, as no other generation in time, that the security of the world is in its obedience to one will—the will of the Christian's God. The final world unity will not be a League of Nations. It cannot be a colossal empire. It must be a spiritual kingdom, a Christian brotherhood. Let the thinkers of time know that two millenniums ago the Nazarene taught his followers to pray for such an end. For two thousand years Christians, as they have prayed, have held the world in their gaze and in God's gaze. What impulses have come forth from that prayer, what powers it has unloosed in the heart of man and in the universe, no philosopher can tell; but that prayer must have an answer if this earth is finally to be our Lord's.

When we pray about bread and butter, clothes, and a roof over us, there is danger that we may grow to be beggars instead of comrades; and God wants us to be com-

rades. We are partners in his world enterprise. It is one of our great themes of conversation with God, one of the great identifications with him. Let us pray, then, "Thy kingdom come," and, lest earthly ideas of conquest, of trampling armies and vaunting power, obscure the real meaning of our Lord's kingdom, add, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

Now we are ready for the bread-and-butter part of the prayer, in its proper place. How the awe, the intimacy, the world vision, that have gone before fill our hearts as we ask these common, daily things. We are the children of an almighty King. The hard stress of daily living, its cares, its burdens, its narrowing pettinesses, need this thing to empower and envision the Christian's soul—*prayer!*

Rom. 8. 26-28

How God Helps Prayer

Many times some young person has impatiently exclaimed: "What's the use of telling God all these things? He knows about them already!" True, God does know—to the tiniest, undreamed-of need of your life. The God who was thoughtful enough to provide for the nourishment of the tiniest cell of your body, for every breath and heart throb, surely understands our needs. He knows needs in our lives of which we never have been conscious. The great, yearning Spirit of God prays over you as you never prayed for yourself. But you must first put yourself in the attitude of prayer. The man who never takes down his telephone receiver never hears a message from it. The man who never approaches God in prayer automatically cuts off God's connection with himself.

How Prayer Helps God

Prayer's A B C is asking. The higher algebra of prayer, its philosophy, is interceding. Intercession is praying for God's business rather than for our business. Intercession is prayer used as a force to further God's cause. Most of us know prayer as a means; few of us know it as a power: yet the mightiest power the Christian has at his disposal

is prayer. Prayer is mightier than organization. It is greater than money. It is surer than leadership.

The strange thing about intercession is that when you multiply the number of interceders, power increases by a ratio that doubles and quadruples with each new intercessor. The real romance of prayer is in this field of intercession. For years the China Inland Mission has maintained hundreds of missionaries in the field entirely through prayer. Prayer was the financial plan of the great orphanage of George Müller in Bristol, England. Prayer energized the Methodist Centenary. One church I know, after incredible efforts to free itself from debt, ending in success, found itself facing an additional sixty-five thousand dollars for world missions; but prayer won out. Like a battalion of faith the intercessors of that church set themselves to pray for this enterprise that seemed so impossible yet was so imperative. Was it by chance, on the evening when the Centenary canvassers reported, that the figures on the blackboard announcing the total stood at sixty-five thousand twenty-nine dollars? Prayer does things! The finest, sanest lesson on prayer, and one every Christian needs, is this final lesson that prayer is power.

When Christians unite to pray they become units of heavenly power. Their prayers shake Jerichos of indifference, turn back insolent Sennacheribs of selfishness in helpless rout, and bring in God's wondrous day of world-wide brotherhood.

Guideposts and Question Marks

What does happen when you pray?

Why does prayer seem so unreal, so impractical?

How can we make prayer real?

How did prayer help Jesus in his work?

Did Jesus learn about prayer through praying?

How do we know that God hears us when we pray?

Would we believe more in prayer if God answered us audibly when we prayed?

Why do men pray to God in times of great peril or great need, though they may never pray at other times?

Why did the disciples need Jesus' lesson on prayer? Do we need it also?

What do you think is the greatest petition in the Lord's Prayer?

Should we pray for that which we can do for ourselves?

Why do we need the assistance of God's Spirit in our praying?

Is there more power in social than individual prayer? Why?

If it is possible to accomplish things through prayer, why do we not use it more?

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN'S WORSHIP

Luke 4. 10-22

Why Go to Church?

Why is it that churchgoing is popularly voted tedious and tiresome? Talk about picnics, about camping, about parties, and everybody is alert and interested. Talk about going to church, and headaches appear, alibis multiply. Plainly churchgoing isn't as popular as the "movies." Impatiently someone speaks up and utters what a lot of other bodies are thinking to themselves: "Why do we need to go to church? Isn't Sunday school enough? Isn't it enough to go to our young people's society? Why go to church?"

Why have a church at all?

Perhaps this question shocks you just a bit. "We must have the church! How could we get along without it?" Lots of people are getting along without it. If it is reasonable to ask, "Why go to church?" why not carry the question to its logical conclusion: "Why a church at all?"

How the Church Sustains Life's Best

The church is different from all other institutions. Were it political, a government, it would sustain these things by its authority, commanding their support, punishing their neglect. Were it commercial, it would put a price on every service it renders and refuse to serve unless it were paid. It would regulate prices by demand. It would monopolize spiritual privilege and make mankind pay its asking. Were it fraternal, its privileges and service would be limited to the initiated. No others might apply. We only need to mention these contrasts to what the church really is to see instantly how differently the church accomplishes its purpose.

The real means the church uses to sustain these high and holy things in the lives of men is to keep alive, to initiate and nourish and develop and sustain the sense of God

in men's souls. The real reason for the Sabbath is God. The real reason for unselfishness and kindliness and service and virtue is the character of God himself. These things will bulk large or small in the life of any city, nation, or age as they bulk largely or inconsiderably in its thinking.

What Makes You Think of God?

What is it that keeps the thought of God alive in your life? Is it your reading? Think a bit! What have you read to-day? this week? this month? How much did you learn from these newspapers, these books and magazines, about God? Was it the lectures you heard, the entertainments you attended, what you and your friends talked about as you met, even your own home, which kept God in your thought? Thinking that way about it, there was very little in your life helping you to know God better, drawing you closer to him, assisting you to find him, apart from the church.

Honestly, now, is it not churchgoing which brings him closest to you after all? It is the folks who are churchgoing folks who think most about God. The folks who think least about God are usually those who do not go to church at all. They forget him, forget to pray, forget to read their Bibles, and, at last, forget that God has any part in their lives at all.

Jesus, by his practice, sets his seal of approval upon the conventional means for keeping God a living presence in the lives of folks. If any human being ever lived who did not need to go to church to worship, to observe the formal methods of remembering God, it was Jesus of Nazareth; but he was loyal to the synagogue, the church of his day.

Luke 18. 9, 10

How Much Should I Get for Churchgoing?

I have known children who had to be bribed to go to church, a nickel a service; a lollypop to go and another for staying! What childishness! Yet, secretly, we do feel that we deserve a *Croix de Guerre* or something of the kind when we go to church. Honestly some of us feel that we

are favoring the preacher, the church,—and God—by our presence there!

It was a pertinent lesson that Jesus taught that day by his object lesson of the servant. What do servants draw their wages for? Certainly for serving those who employ them. Does the motorman expect you to thank him for taking you down in the morning? Does the policeman expect your praise for doing his duty? How absurd it would be for the garbage man to refuse to collect your garbage any more, simply because you didn't appreciate his services! Sometimes it takes such palpable absurdities as these to show us the folly of things we ourselves do every day. We, the servants of Almighty God, act sometimes as if we expected him to call at our door Sunday afternoon to express his personal appreciation of our worship in his house that morning!

We mistake the relation we bear to this business of worship. It is our duty, our obligation, to recognize the fact —the rights and the claims of our God. Worship is not pleasing ourselves by listening to a preacher we care to hear, or by the satisfaction we find in a fine choir, or through our sense of pride in our connection with a congregation of the socially elect. Worship is the human soul paying its respect to God, taking time from money-making, study, pleasure, and work to own that he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Worship is the human spirit humbly bowing before the divine Spirit and renewing its old vows of love and service. Worship is a duty we owe God—a duty as continuous and unceasing as we owe eating to our appetite, drink to our thirsty tissues, thought to our mind, and sleep to our weary body. Your soul cannot live without God. This is the eternal duty of worship. Next Sunday as you enter the church door remember that you are there chiefly to pay the duty you owe, as a servant, to your God. You owe it to God. God does not owe you anything for worshiping him!

Luke 18. 11-14

Is There No Other Way to Worship?

Cannot I worship God in nature as well as at church? Cannot I pay my duty to God as the automobile carries

me through the glorious world he has made? through his forests, beside his clear, crystal lakes, in the shadow of his mountains? Doubtless God is in these all. They inspired the prophets. They have been the song of the poets. Worship is as possible before a great wonder of God's world like Niagara or the Grand Canyon or the sea as in the greatest cathedral man's hands have reared. However, wisdom has its answer.

While worship is possible in these ways, how many persons who seek them really worship? How many persons returning from the Sunday auto trip have really met God in his out-of-doors? How many folks have a new consciousness of God because they spent Sunday at the beach instead of in the church? Can you tell?

The strictly truthful answer simply annihilates the argument for this sort of nature worship. For every person who truly finds this to be worship, there are a hundred who never find God in it at all. Were we to abolish the orderly, established means of worship for the license of this sort of freedom, the effects would be as disastrous for religion and morals as the complete abolishment of the church.

Religion and worship, as well as business and education, must be carried on systematically. Most of us are creatures of routine. Our best living will be that ruled by regularity and order. Jesus understood this when he sent the lepers to see the priest. The miracles of God must not undo the institutions of God. The presence of God in the wonders of nature must not cancel the established ways whereby men renew their consciousness of him week by week.

John 4. 19-24

The Real Freedom in Worship

The real freedom in worship is not in means but in use. The continual peril of religion is that worship becomes automatic. Do you remember when you learned to drive a car—how fearful you were? how hard it was to get eye and hand and foot to work together, so that you could see the danger, sound the horn, and put on the brake at one and the same time? But now you never think of it at all. If I were to ask you what you did just a moment ago when you

found yourself menaced by the car at your left and the others approaching in front of you and from the street to your right, you could not tell me. What you did was a matter of habit rather than a definite series of things of which you thought and which you willed. This is one of our nerve savers, but it is always perilous to men's souls when the things that ought to be purposed become automatic. Have you never prayed, and your lips murmured the words of prayer, while the mind was absent elsewhere? Was that real prayer? The danger in the established forms of worship is that persons follow these automatically. They go to church because it is a habit. They are respectful during service because that is custom. They pray when the congregation prays, stand, sit, kneel, and bow at the command of routine; and sometimes the heart never worships at all.

The Jew could worship nowhere save at Jerusalem, in the Temple. The Samaritan worshiped at Gerizim only. There are folks who could not worship anywhere save in a Methodist church or an Episcopal church or a Lutheran church. There are persons who cannot really pray in church unless they stand; others unless they kneel. In fact, neither the place nor the posture, essentially, has anything to do with it. The tragedy of religious ritualism and formalism is that worship, which God made to be as free as the song from the bird's throat, as the turning of a flower toward the sun, has been made a mechanical thing, to be ordered and practiced.

How can a thing be ordered yet free? How may we use the ritual of the church and still avoid becoming its prisoners? Jesus told the woman by the well the secret of it. The safeguard of the spirit is the reality of the worship in the heart of the worshiper, his sincerity, his conscious approach to God, his reverent humility before him. This is the only reality in worship. This is the only real meaning in going to church, in prayer, in testimony. If this is in your heart, you can truly worship anywhere—with the Roman Catholic in the mass, with the Quaker in his silence. If it is not in your heart, then the holiest sacrament, the most solemn ceremony, the most impressive service, is an empty mockery.

God cares nothing about candles and bells and crossings and genuflexions and standings and kneelings and amens and Quaker silences. These are nothing to him, for all these are human. What God cares about is what man means, in his inmost heart, when he does these things.

Acts 2. 41 to 3. 1

What Worship Does for Men

God made men to live together, to play together, to work together, to pray together. Congregations are just as natural as herds, packs, droves, and flocks. They are God's way for human beings, for human beings need the help of each other. That is why we have churches instead of household shrines.

When men worship together, *really* worship together, the very fact of it begins to affect society. The God each worships is the same God. They worship in the same way. They enjoy the same experiences. They hope for the same joys. They pray for the same blessings. Heart warms to heart as the glowing particles of metal in the pieces of iron the smith welds on his anvil are attracted to one another by their mutual warmth until they cling together as a common substance.

Love is always pictured as warmth; selfishness as cold. When men's hearts warm with kindred worship, the selfishness of their natures begins to melt; men grow kindly one to another, more merciful, more brotherly; men are happier. These are the natural consequences of real worship everywhere—in China and Korea, in Palestine and America. This was what happened those wonderful first days of Christianity, when love seized like a madness upon men, and no man counted anything his own for the brethren's sake. We have so little of this marvel these modern days, because so much of our worship is in form instead of in spirit and truth. Bring back the marvel, and we shall duplicate the miracles of brotherhood in Acts.

1 Cor. 14. 14

Worship and Reason

Reason sometimes appears as the critic of religion. Rea-

son criticizes the emotional extravagances of revivalism. Reason frowns upon the disorder of popular religion. Reason sharply rebukes the enthusiast, the fanatic. We must always be sure that reason observes its place—that it does not intrude where it does not belong, into that which is not its affair; but worship needs the corrective of reason. "Holy Rollers" and gift of tongues, all the familiar extravagances of extreme religious sects, point out the necessity. We do not need to turn clowns to be enthusiastic. We do not need to disconnect our brains to be religious. Reason —kindly, wise, restraining—holds man in his worshiping to the great, vital thing—real freedom in the Spirit. God, the God whose laws of harmony make perfect music, whose stars sweep in majestic order, whose world of beauty is never grotesque, is not the God of grotesqueries and absurdities and indecencies in the name of religion.

Eph. 5. 18-20

Whence Worship Comes

There's a difference between a spring and a water tap. The waters welling up between those mossy stones of the spring are the effulgence of nature's wealth of waters poured out lavishly in the very living of the spring. The water we draw from the tap is a dead, tame thing, pumped and piped to the spot where we use it, without a will of its own, without a vital source in its own stream. Let the pumps cease or the pipes burst, and it fails.

Real worship cannot be pumped up: cannot be organized, led, conducted. Real worship is like the free flow of the spring. It is something in man's very soul which must realize itself visibly in the expression we call worship. God himself, in our hearts, is the source of all true worship, the knowledge of him, the love of him, the experience of him. Worship is the overflow of experience, not experience the outcome of worship.

If you do not like to pray, there is nothing in prayer for you. If the hour in God's house seems tedious to you, something's wrong with the spring. The overflow has stopped. The channels are clogged somewhere. Look to your heart.

Do you remember those first days after you gave your heart to God? How much the church meant to you then! You could not think of it even without a feeling of affection for it. How long the days seemed between the seasons of worship! How your heart leaped at the thought of going yonder! His Spirit was in your heart—that is the explanation. What you felt was only the overflow of what you had in your heart. Keep the sources open. No sense of duty alone, no mere obligation, no mere attitude of respect, no habit or custom, can possibly equal this living meaning of worship, this overflow of the living Spirit within you.

Guideposts and Question Marks

Why do you like to go to church? Why don't you?

What does the church mean to you? do for you?

Could the world get along without the church? Could the city? Could you?

What makes you think about God? Where and how have you learned most about him?

Is churchgoing a duty? a privilege? or both?

What is the most worshipful thing you do as a Christian?

Can you feel God in the mountains? the sea? the woods?

What would happen if everybody worshiped just as it pleased them?

Why is it necessary to follow a form of worship? Would it not be better if each of us worshiped as it suited him the best?

Where is the reality in worship—in the form or the spirit of that which we do?

Do you find God closer when you meet him by yourself alone or when you come to him with others, as in some service?

Is it right to insist that worship be conducted with some regard for propriety and custom? Will this not destroy its spontaneity, the Spirit of God in it?

Can a man who does not love God really worship?

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS CHURCH

Matt. 10. 1-4

The Genealogy of a Church

Have you ever thought what a wonderful institution a church is—your church? Possibly you have merely taken it for granted, like grocery stores, and railway depots, and schools; but it has a history. Probably that little, shabby church in your town, which you are rather ashamed to own as your church, has the oldest history of any institution in that town of yours.

The railroad? That is only about a hundred years old. The stores? Older, it is true, but comparatively modern. The school? If it is a public school, it is as recent as American history. The church is the oldest of them all, reaching back to the earliest beginnings in American history, back to the mighty Reformation and Luther; back to days when emperors trembled before the command of this institution, the church; back to intrepid Paul; back to the apostles; back to Christ!

I like sometimes to sketch the family tree of this institution, the church, that its visible history may lie under my eye. Did you ever see a "family tree"? a genealogical tree? tracing back the various branches of a family through all the ramifications of that family history to the original founder of the line? There are few things more interesting. How like a tree the record looks traced out on paper! First the great trunk of the family line, with the founder's name; then the first branches, his children; then their children, and *their* children, and THEIR children; through all the countless divisions, and subdivisions, and subdivisions of subdivisions to the last uncles and aunts and cousins who are the tiniest, outermost twigs of the tree.

What a family tree that Methodist church, or Baptist church, or Congregational church, or Presbyterian church in your town has! There is, first of all, the great, undivided trunk of the ancient church of apostolic days. Then the first great divisions, the vast limbs which make up Christendom—that to the left, the Eastern Church—the Greeks, the Nestorians, the Armenians, the Kopts, and the rest. The great, branchless rod of Roman Catholicism is in the center—branchless. Once I asked a little boy what you did if you didn't want a tree to have any branches, and he gave me the answer: "Pinch the buds!" Would you know why that great, branchless trunk stands there in the midst of the tree of God? Through the centuries Rome has been pinching the buds of individual expression—thought, desire, aspiration—conviction extinguished, that a church might be unchangeable—and that in a changing world! On the right of this branchless tree, in contrast, is the vast luxuriance of Protestantism—the great branches of its mighty Reformation trunk—the Lutherans, the Reformed churches, the Anglicans, the pietistic societies, the Baptists, each with its own smaller branches and twigs. Try some day to sketch this wonderful tree which is the history of the Church of God. Out there, somewhere, in a tiny twig of that tree, you will find the church in your town, your church, part of this mighty growth of history which Jesus planted when he chose twelve apostles and gave them power.

Don't you feel a new respect for this church of yours? Perhaps, secretly, you have felt just a bit ashamed of it. Remember, it is part of a great world movement—God's world movement—for the sake of mankind.

Matt. 16. 13-20

THE CHURCH AND JESUS CHRIST

The church is the world's oldest witness to our Lord. That witnessing began the day it was revealed to Peter that Jesus was more than a man. The world in which Jesus lived was sorely puzzled by him. It could not classify him. Most of us are easy to catalogue. We are short

or tall, thin or fat, fair or dark, weak or strong, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, famous or obscure, white or black or brown or yellow or red. But the world could not place Jesus in any pigeon hole it knew. It tried. Perhaps he was the dead Baptist or the fiery Elijah or some other prophet. Clearly he was no ordinary man. His hold on heaven was so sure that he must have personally known the heavenly state before coming to earth. He did not fit into the religious plan of his age. The Temple could do nothing with him, for he was greater than the Temple. The synagogue could teach him nothing, for he was wiser than the synagogue. Who was he, this young Galilean, who troubled civil and religious authorities alike?

Had Jesus proved to be merely a prophet returned to earth, an Elijah, a Jeremiah, even John the Baptist, there would have been no need for a church. Temple and synagogue would still have sufficed. A new hour in the religious history of the world was ushered in by Peter's declaration of his faith in the deity of Jesus. That is the definite beginning of Christian history. That declaration of faith made the church a necessity, inevitable. There must be a church to testify of him, for no religious institution then in existence knew him as he truly was. There must be a church to gather together the believers in him, for a new life had come into the world—a life that was dependent supremely on a personal, living relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ. There must be a church to take up his task of service, to minister in his loving sympathy to men; for this was what the love of Almighty God meant as he revealed it to men.

The church began with Peter's declaration; not an institution, not an ecclesiasticism, but the witnessing body of believers in him through the ages. Faith is the real *petros*, the rock upon which Jesus founded his church; and all who believe in him as divine and so witness to him are fragments of the granitic foundation of Christian history. The church will never live beyond this recognition of him. To forget his witness is for the church to become speechless; to modify its faith in him is to render it powerless; to reject the great conclusion of that first human witness is to destroy whatever divine authority the church possesses.

The church stands or falls with this uniqueness of the character of Christ. It rests upon the authority of his claims. It is not a denatured heathenism. It is not the Roman Empire metamorphosed into an ecclesiasticism. The church is Christ's or it is nothing! So long as the world needs Christ it will need the witnessing, the serving, and the ministry of his church. So long the church will need the loyalty and fellowship of every sincere lover of Christ. If you love him, then the church has a claim upon you, and the world has a claim on you through the church.

Do I Need the Church to Be a Christian?

Every once in a while somebody gets the foolish idea that he can be a Christian without the church. You can. That is undeniable. You can be a scholar without a school. You can be a soldier without the formality of joining the army. You can even be an American without becoming naturalized! Of course, no one will know that you are. You will have no legal claims to be any of these. In practical questions, where matters of recognized relationship enter in, you will find yourself out of court. But this fact will not prevent you from actually being any of these; it will only prevent you from being a useful and recognized representative of them.

A soldier in the field without his outfit is a lost man, a hungry man, a powerless man, a useless man. So is a Christian without the church. Some few have tried it but with failure every time. God's own method is best. The church, like you, is human. It makes many failures. It is not always wise, not always Christian, but it is the organized way the Christian spirit functions in this earth. It needs you if you are a Christian; you need the church if you would stay a Christian.

Matt. 18. 15-18

A Family of God

There have been some who imagined that the church was a political organization, a vast political clique, to influence all things for its own profit (and that of its favorites).

Others have imagined that the church is a divinely appointed oligarchy to rule in this world, to be consulted concerning every affair. Again, others have regarded the church as a selected group of those whom God has chosen as his favorites to the exclusion of the rest of mankind. Still others see in the church only an institution to be organized and systematized, to be perfected in its mechanics. None of these conceptions appeal to me. They seem so far from that of our Lord, who taught us to pray, "Our Father"; from the conception of that apostle who was nearest to Jesus' heart, who wrote: "Little children, love one another!" The church of God is not a political machine. It is not an oligarchy nor an exclusive privilege nor a piece of mechanism. It is a family—just a family. What a wonderful thing a family is, anyhow! It exists because father loved mother, and mother loved father; and out of their love for each other God blessed them with children who expand that love and return it. The ties that bind it together are the tenderest, holiest ties our earthly associations know.

I think this is what Jesus meant the church to be. Whenever any member of the family is ill or unfortunate or in need, how love goes instantly out to them! That is because we belong to one another, and love has a claim!

This world needs a greater family like that—a family that will include us all, rich and poor, great and obscure, wise and ignorant, strong and weak; where love is the bond and the claim. Race cannot do this. Class cannot be this. Nationality cannot achieve this thing the world needs. Only Jesus, the Friend of the whole world, of every class and race and nation and condition of men throughout the whole earth, can bring mankind into friendship and love with one another.

This is what the church has been trying to do through ages of the hampering, hindering jealousies and selfishnesses and hatreds of human hearts. This is why the church has an interest in the misunderstandings and quarrels between Christians. This is why the church has authority on earth and in heaven. It is God's family here. In time to come it will include God's complete family over there.

Matt. 18. 18

The Authority of the Church

Where did the church get its authority? What is that authority?

There were days in the church's past when it insolently claimed a supreme power over kings and emperors and peoples on the ground that it came from God and so had a divine right that the world must recognize. Its anathema blasted the hopes of heaven for those who opposed its will. It held the threat of its power of heaven and hell over men and ruled them by the fears this pretended power inspired.

Those days are impossible now. We live in a world of freedom, where authority is derived from the governed. No king to-day dare claim absolute and uncontrolled, irresponsible power on the strength of a divine right. No more can any church aspire to absolutism, basing it upon such a claim. Absolutism in human hands inevitably tends to become tyranny. It is foreign to the deepest passions within us to submit our wills to another's will, to live, to think, to pray, as another commands, not as life itself pleases.

Our fathers fought to free themselves from England, simply because an authority in which they had no representation was tyranny. We fought the Great War, primarily, to establish the rights of the nations of the earth against the tyranny of might, and to-day it is an established principle of mankind that the smallest and weakest peoples, with the greatest, have an equal claim to the choice of their own government and the protection of their territories.

Is the church an autocracy? Can it be a democracy?

Its authority is in Jesus Christ himself. That power he never relinquished. Earthly agents carry out his will, but he wills. No church is his church unless he rules it, unless his spirit is manifest in it. This is the test for every claim to authority, power, and recognition in his name: Is the church making the claim Christlike?

The Mission of the Church

What is this agelong institution, the church, intended to do here in the world?

Primarily it is here to tell the world about the good news of Jesus Christ. Christianity is a propaganda, as socialism is a propaganda.

Christianity, however, is more: It is the Spirit of its Lord in living men, manifesting him to the world in service, in ministry, in brotherhood. Christianity must live Christ as well as tell about him. Telling about him will forever leave him a theory for the listener until he sees Jesus incarnate in the life of the one who tells about him. That is the mighty, convincing argument of the Christian propagandist—the argument of life.

During the Great War the Young Men's Christian Association offered its services to the government of India in the great army camps, where thousands of Indian youth were concentrated and trained for service in Europe. The government pondered over the request. It had dangers in it for those in authority. How could a Christian organization be permitted to enter these camps and minister to Hindu and Moslem youth without setting the empire aflame with revolt? Yet here were these thousands of young men, suddenly torn from their native villages, far separated from their friends, in the moral perils of the army camp, needing the very service this splendid organization was alone qualified to render them. What could be done? At last a decision was reached, and a proposition made. The offer of the Y. M. C. A. was accepted conditionally. The proffered service was gladly permitted, but the name of Christ must not be mentioned. There must be no teaching or preaching in his name. In these Indian camps, at home and in Europe, the Y. M. C. A. could be admitted only as a service organization. The men who had made the offer met to consider the conditions the government had set. These were hard for men who loved Jesus Christ, who offered this very service they were to render in his name. They debated it for days. To accept such conditions, was not this to betray their Lord? Then they thought of the boys in these camps—homesick boys, wounded, sick, and friendless. They could not get those boys out of their minds. What would Jesus himself have them do? Then they remembered: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye

took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me." That memory settled the question. The conditions imposed were accepted for the sake of needy men, brethren of the Lord whom these Y. M. C. A. men served. But they said among themselves: "We cannot preach Christ nor teach Christ; but we can live Christ wherever we go, in these very camps where our mention of his name is forbidden!" And those Christian men went into these camps of Moslem and Hindu youths living Christ; ministering as he would have ministered. Surely they fulfilled his great command. He honored their living testimony by hundreds of men in these very camps who came to know him through the daily life and service of these men his servants.

This is the mission of the church—to live Christ among men.

Matt. 18. 19

The Power of United Faith

Power usually is just the assemblage of little possibilities. The real power which drives the great locomotive over the rails is the united power of an infinite number of water drops transformed into steam. The power of a great army is just the united powers of the men who are the soldiers in that army. The power of a nation is in its united wealth, purpose, and physical strength.

Every Christian is a possible unit of power. The purpose of a multitude is stronger than the bulk of its individual purposes. The faith of a few Christians together is cumulative. It exceeds that of the same Christians separately. It is easier to operate one power that will pump twenty oil wells at one time than to use twenty smaller powers to pump the same wells separately. It is better business to bring together ten separate shops under one roof and conduct their buying and selling as one enterprise than to try to conduct them separately. This is a proved principle in business, wherever power is used for practical ends. Only the church insists upon dividing and subdividing its possible power until the cost of operation, in time, energy,

and money is practically prohibitive for the results shown.

But the spirit of Christian unity is gaining ground. Methods of competition and overlapping are giving way to cooperation and federation. These are the first steps toward reunion and greater efficiency in the work of the Kingdom.

Matt. 18. 20

Is God Still in the Church?

How close God seems to that early church! He is working with them, helping them, choosing their leaders, bringing results. Is God still in the church? Is he in your church?

You think of the church you have known all your life. You think of what it does, of the many petty things, human things, you know about it. Perhaps you never have thought of the possibility that God may be in your church. Is he?

It is easy to think of him in the church at Antioch but difficult to imagine him in the church of Antioch Corners; on Broadway, Cleveland; in Bloomfield, Iowa.

Why should it be? If, by some magic, it were possible for you to visit Antioch or Philippi or Thessalonica, possibly they might seem different to you than they seem as you read about them in the Bible. I think that it is quite possible that you might be disappointed in them and their members; even possible that you would not feel like joining them at all. They might not look as good as Silver Creek, New York! Yet God was there, and God is here. Perhaps you have never looked for God in your own church. It is easy to see the human in churches; hard to recognize the divine. Ask some older member to tell you the story of your church, of its struggles, its victories, its revivals, its blessings for the community. Your eyes will open. Why, God is *here!* Like the boy at Bethel, you knew it not. Of course he is here.

The greatest promise ever made concerning Jesus Christ is this—that eventually all things, *all things,* will be placed under his feet. Government, wealth, rulership, and authority, all his! He will rule this world some time. He will be mightier than kings and emperors and conquerors;

greater than presidents, wiser than scholars, richer than millionaires. He, this mighty One, is the Head of this church of yours. What? Not at Jerusalem Corners! Yes, in Jerusalem Corners as truly as in Jerusalem. He, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, is to be the Master of all.

His mastery must be over a human institution. That institution has made many failures. It will make more of them, for it is human. It will be weak where it should be strong; but it is his. The only way in which he can absolutely control it is for him to absolutely control you, a member in it. It all comes back to you. America can never be a better America than you are an American. The church can never be more Christian than *you* are. How the whole problem circles back to our personal experience, loyalty, and love for him!

God helping me, I purpose that God shall never be shut out of the church in which I am a member because he has been shut out of my life. Come what may, in this church of mine I am determined that there will always be one open channel into it, through which he may come whenever he wills, and that channel my own surrendered heart!

Guideposts and Question Marks

How long has your church been in your town?

What was the first duty the church of the apostles had to perform?

Why did men think that Jesus might be John the Baptist or Elijah?

Why should I join the church? Give your own reasons.

Should I join the church if I do not believe all that it teaches?

Ought I to join the church if I do not approve of all its rules?

Can the church serve mankind better as a family than as merely an institution or organization? Why?

What authority, really, has the church to say how I shall act, what I shall do?

Is this authority human or divine?

What is the real mission of the church in your town, as

you see it? Is the church fulfilling that mission? If not, who is to blame? What are you doing to help?

How did men know that God was in the church in the day of the apostles?

How may we recognize his presence to-day?

What would you have done had you been placed in position to decide the question faced by the Y. M. C. A. workers in India?

Can anything prevent God from entering a church if there is one heart which is his open channel into it?

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE

The Rules of the Game

The greatest game in the world—what is it? The Scotchman says, "Golf"; the Englishman, "Cricket"; the American, "Baseball"; but there is a greater game still: There is life—a game played on every continent, by every race, in every age. The other day I saw in San Diego, California, the replica in plaster of a great stone monolith from Guatemala, a relic of the vanished race of the Mayas, covered with hieroglyphics of every imaginable kind. The archæologists have deciphered very little of it. They do know that each sculptured rectangle on the monument is dated and they can read the dates, but that is all. Though they are unable to read what the inscriptions say, however, they know what they are about. They are all about this greatest game—this game of life as the Maya played it.

Everybody is interested in life—every race that has ever lived upon the planet. There is so much dependent on living—happiness, success, wealth, position, fame, and memory. When the world ceases to be interested in living, the race will perish from the earth.

There have been many ways suggested in which to play this great game. Greed has its way: "Get everything you can." Everything is fair in greed's rules. Gouge! Snatch! Strike! Steal! Lie! Kill! But get! Every race has its own rules. The Indian has his, the Chinese his, the African savage his; the Hindu, the Persian, the Turk. Some of these are as impossible and unfair as the rules of greed, others are noble and inspiring; but the world has come to recognize that the best rules of the game are those we call Christian.

What is Christianity? Just Christ's rules for life and playing the game by them!

Old Rules Revised

Everyone who knows anything whatever about baseball,

football, or basketball knows that it is necessary from time to time to revise the rules to meet new emergencies that have arisen in these games; but the new rules from year to year are merely the revision of the original rules. As you study the Book of God to learn how to play this game of life you will note that this same thing happens here also. The rules for 1920 are different from those of B. C. 2000, but not the essential laws of the game; just a revision of the rules—that is the difference.

Mic. 6. 8

Some Old-Time Rules

One of the finest, clearest statements in the Bible of the rules of this great human game of life is centuries old. Micah, a prophet of long ago, is the author. Here it is in a nutshell: Do justly, love mercy, remember that there is a God, and behave accordingly! Isn't that fine? A game must be fair; no "dirty work" in it. And never forget the rules: that distinguishes God's players everywhere from the rest.

God's team plays fair! How the true sportsman hates the team that cheats, fouls, "slugs," or "spikes"! One of the finest things outside of religion is sportsmanship; playing the game with an ideal for the game; playing fairly when there is opportunity to cheat, just because a true sportsman counts cheating beneath him; taking defeat honorably in preference to winning dishonorably; willing to place the game itself above the mere winning! That's sportsmanship. It is hunting that thinks of something besides the day's bag. It is football that will not stand for unfair and brutal tactics on the part of one's own team. It is baseball that wins by clean hitting and clean fielding instead of baiting the umpire and intimidating him. It is basketball that plays fair when, in the thick of the play, the referee cannot see what is happening.

An unfair game is never a real win. Somebody cheated! Somebody fouled! Someone won by dishonorable means! No team or player ever won in that way without paying a fearfully high cost for the victory. He may have won the score but he lost the real game and knows it. The real

game of life is not to make money, to gain power, to attain to position, to gain possessions. These are only the chalk on the score board, the tally on the sheet, telling the world that we are winning. Life is a game for character. A man may win money and lose character; win power and lose the confidence and friendship of his fellow men; win the Presidency or the premiership yet within him know that he has been a traitor to his own soul. Such a man has lost. He cannot win.

It is wonderful that Micah the prophet should have discovered this so long ago. Even Micah's rules, played to-day, would be fairer than those of greed, the ordinary rules the world is willing to accept. That is because even in Micah's day God was in his rules.

Matt. 22. 36-40

THE RULES OF A CHRISTIAN AS JESUS GAVE THEM

Every field of sport has its great names, the masters of its particular game; but the greatest player the game of life has ever known is Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord and Christ. All generations since his day, all authorities, whatever their creed or race, have accorded him a unique position among the players of this game. The rules he gave were the rules by which he played. Whenever you are tempted to think it would be easier to play the game under the rules of pleasure or the rules of greed, remember that Jesus played the game under these same Christian rules—and won!

Will you let me give you his rules in a very simple way? in a way you will never forget? These are his rules: *justice to my neighbor, kindness to my neighbor, brotherhood with my neighbor, service for my neighbor;* and then (Micah's old rule in a new and more personal form) a passion for God which includes everything you have and are—mind, strength, and soul—all. Loyalty to God!

These are the rules of the game of life as Jesus taught them.

Rom. 8. 1-11

NOT LAWS BUT LIFE

Until Jesus came the Jew was the most serious player

this game of life knew. This was his "flare," as the French say. This was the Hebrew's specialty, the spiritual, just as beauty was that of the Greek, law that of the Roman, and trade that of the Anglo-Saxon. The man of Israel specialized in religion and outdistanced all competitors. He made religion the supreme business of his life.

The Jew began with a vision and ended with technique. There are pianists who are technical masters of the pianoforte. They have mastered every technical detail—the percussion of the keys upon the strings, the technique of the fingers, the utmost development of the muscles controlling them, the mastery of the science of music. Their execution is faultless, as faultless as if some marvel of a machine sat there at the key board; but the soul of music has escaped them. Technique has taken the place of that singing passion in the soul which is the real secret of every master musician.

The Jew became a technician in religion. He reduced religion to a scientific code of minutiæ. He prescribed to the minutest details the way to worship. He legislated upon the matter of the number of steps a Jew might lawfully take on a Sabbath. He defined what a burden was that could not be carried on his holy day. He devised a whole code of washings and cleansings; a complete system of penances for conscious and unconscious violations of the law. He codified religion. He originated a new profession to scientifically interpret his code, then a system of courts to enforce it.

It was about as much like real religion as chess is like football. Just imagine it! This was no game for amateurs. It professionalized religion. The real players were the Pharisees and scribes. The common folks did not pretend to play. Do you wonder that ordinary folks were not interested very much in religion?

Then Jesus came; and religion became *life!*

Ethics Versus Life

Paul was profoundly stirred by the freedom of the Christian life. For him the old technical, legalistic religion of Judaism was bondage. When he compares it with Christianity, there is a feeling in his sentences, as he

writes, which resembles that of a prisoner who has been set free. It is this marvelous freedom that possesses him whenever he speaks of Christianity. It is the eternal secret of this religion's power.

Do you know what is the worst possible bondage man might be compelled to endure? It would not be the fetters and chains and the dungeon of a prison. It would not be shackles, an auction block, the overseer's whip, slavery. It would not be to fall into the possession of the enemy, to be herded like beasts within barbed wire and denied the commonest decencies to which a human has right. The worst bondage I can possibly imagine would be simply this—to be made personally responsible for the breathing of my own lungs, the beating of my own heart, to be compelled to will each separate heartbeat and individual breath. Think what would happen should some mysterious power suddenly make you so responsible. Whatever interest you may have in this particular lesson would cease here. All the familiar wanderings of the mind would be forgotten. The only thing of which you could possibly think would be: "Contract! expand! contract! expand! inhale! exhale! inhale! exhale!" If you took your mind off this responsibility even for a moment, the heart would cease, your breath would be cut off, and it would all be over. Picture it for a moment. What a bondage this would be! And you had not even given thought to these matters until they were mentioned here, had you? You don't know whether your heart beat a moment ago or just now or is just going to beat. Don't you see? That which would be infinitely difficult, were we compelled to will it ourselves, heartbeat by heartbeat, breath by breath, becomes easy when life undertakes it; for life does the thing automatically, and we never need bother about it at all.

This is what Paul means by being free through the law of the Spirit. When religion becomes life, then religious living, moral living, becomes automatic through life processes. Religion has become a living something, which is a part of our very selves. It is no longer an external thing of forms and practices. It is no longer a code; it is a life.

Christianity as a code of conduct, minutely prescribing what we may or may not do, is an impossibility as a living

proposition. Christianity as a mere system of ethics, unaided by the Spirit of an indwelling God, is tragically a failure. As a life, Christ within us, it works everywhere—in ancient Palestine, in Rome, in China, India, Africa, anywhere, if we are willing to receive it.

Gal. 3. 23-27

The Man Who Lives in Us

Paul uses some striking figures illustrating this. He said once that it was as if a new Man had moved into this old, familiar house, the body, in which our human spirit had been dwelling—the Man Christ Jesus.

Wouldn't it be strange if Jesus actually could come and live in your body? use your hands, your feet, your lips, your eyes, your ears, your very mind? The same body—same height, weight, features, color of eyes and hair, same clothes, same house, same business—but within this familiar man whom all your friends and associates know—Jesus the possessing, controlling Spirit—what a difference that would make!

In another place Paul said that it was as if this body of ours had put on a new and invisible life—that of Jesus Christ. The body folks saw every day would be the old human body; but, invisible yet real, the true body would be the invisible Christ.

That is what Christian living really is in its last analysis. It is having the living Jesus within our hearts. It is putting on Christ, like a great coat that covers and hides our poor, wretched, unworthy selves. We are able to live the new life, because it is really Christ himself who is living this life of ours, not we ourselves.

Gal. 3. 28, 29.

What if Everybody Were a Christ?

What kind of a world would we have if everybody in it—rich and poor, wise and foolish, white and black, and brown and yellow, slaves and kings, men and women—would put on this wonderful garment about which Paul has written, so that everywhere we went we would see Jesus? Jesus the conductor on the street car! Jesus the

policeman on the beat! Jesus behind the counter! Jesus at the cashier's window, in the office, in the director's seat, in the Senate, President of the Republic! Jesus that beggar who just passed! Jesus that Italian who keeps the fruit store on the corner! Jesus the Negro porter! Jesus that Japanese cultivating his little garden! Jesus everywhere!

Think of the changes this would make. How should we treat Jesus the Negro? the Italian? the beggar? the poor man? Jesus working for us down in the mine? Jesus toiling in the steel mill, where a misstep means swift and horrible death? How scrupulous we should be to treat him kindly! How concerned we should be as to his welfare and safety!

Don't you see how this would wipe out instantly all our miserable prejudices—prejudices of race, prejudices of class, prejudices of nationality? These prejudices would become impossibilities were we dealing with Jesus instead of these others.

This is precisely what Christianity proposes to do—to destroy all those wretched, selfish, unchristian distinctions which have caused so much of this world's wretchedness, woe, suffering, and wrong. We are one—one kind of folks—when we are one in Christ, regardless of the color of our skins, the position we may hold in this world, the race to which we may belong by birth. If we are one in Christ, there we shall be all alike, all equal, all worthy.

And this will make over this world!

Gal. 5. 1

Making Liberty Safe

We used a great phrase during the war, which gathered up the vast idealism of that desperate struggle. This was the phrase "Make the world safe for democracy!" Democracy was not safe in this world with German kaiserism in power and conquering. No more would it be safe with national isolation or international greed, or international class rule. There are many things that naturally endanger freedom. This wonderful freedom of the soul, this liberty in Christ, about which we have been talking is no excep-

tion. Freemen are always in danger of becoming serfs and slaves, and none so much as those who are freemen of soul. As the old, selfish powers that created slavery and serfdom in other days now strive to bring about peonage and industrial slavery, or, failing this, for selfish gain place restrictions upon rightful freedom which are intolerable to liberty-loving men, so the selfish powers in our lives are always seeking to enslave us again.

We give our hearts to God and are made free. How wonderful everything seems! It is easy to do right; to think the right things. Then the old selfish, enslaving powers appear again. We are tempted to a wrong thought, to an unworthy decision—and we yield. The enslavers have flung a gossamer thread about us. They will try it again and again. Enough packthread can make even a Samson as helpless a prisoner as chains of steel. Once enslaved, it matters not what the initial means of servitude was. We are slaves.

The price of liberty and freedom for nations and souls is eternal vigilance. Look out for gossamer threads. They are the forerunners of chains and slavery. Stand fast! Fight for this liberty you have gained.

James 1. 19, 20

The Enemies of Freedom

Whom shall we fight? Who are our enemies? The baffling thing about Christian living is that our foes apparently are invisible. We are surrounded when our eyes see no one. We are besieged when we imagine the enemy has fled. We are conquered in the very hour when we think ourselves the conquerors.

The Enemies at the Gates

The most dangerous places in the fortifications of the old-time walled cities were the gates—the openings penetrating the walls. To make a way through those vast walls of masonry meant battering rams and stones toppled from their place, course after course, under the fire of the defenders within. It meant the slow, battering progress toward a breach through which entrance might be made success-

fully. But a gate—that was different. Its protection of bars and doors and portcullis was, after all, temporary. In times of siege watch the gates.

The striking thing evidenced in these words of James is the direction from which we are to expect the enemy and that toward which to turn for reënforcement. The enemy is within, not without. Study the passage from James and see.

Hear!

Many an ancient city was lost through failure immediately to grasp the meaning of the alarm cry from the gate. When the Persians were at the gates of Antioch the Glorious, the people of the city, trusting to their splendid fortifications, were gathered in the great theater listening to a famous actress. At a certain point in the play, with tragic earnestness, she cried, pointing to the mountain above the city, "Behold, the Persians are come!" and the vast audience, thinking it a clever stage play, applauded to the echo; but soon the sky was darkened by showers of arrows, and the city was lost. Its people were not alert to hear and understand the alarm that was their safety. "Be swift to hear!" God will alarm in time if you will be immediate in attention. Listen for God's voice in your conscience, from the Bible, from the pulpit, however God may speak. Be swift to hear, for liberty depends on the heed you give to the alarm.

Slow to Speak

The wise Christian will be as slow to unbar the gate of his lips as he is swift in opening the gate of hearing. Speech is a flame. Like fire, it is dangerous unless we know precisely what we intend doing with it. Thoughtlessly to fling it into a world of tinder is surely to start a conflagration. Most of us have been compelled to fight the fires our careless tongue easily started—fires we never intended to kindle. Open this gate cautiously.

Slow to Wrath

Temper is the gunpowder of the spirit. Just a touch of fire, and bang! we explode. Watch your powder magazine.

Old-time fortresses were always constructed with the powder magazine safely buried underground with a single opening into it, that no stray spark might set it off. God stocks different magazines differently. Some are only black powder. Others are nitroglycerine and dynamite and lyddite. Know what you have in your particular magazine and treat it wisely. Be slow to open the gate. Handle each package carefully. Do not let some premature explosion blow up the fortress. Powder in a great gun aimed at the enemy is victory; powder loose in a fortress under fire, where shells are exploding every second, is a peril. Be careful with your powder! Many a fine Christian life has been blown to ruins by a flaming, unnecessary word, by some senseless anger. It is not only the life that owns the temper which suffers when it explodes. Think of the destruction and tragedy wrought throughout a city when those munition ships blew up in the harbor of Halifax! More than one soul bears scars that are the tragedy of some explosion of anger in another's life, from which they have innocently suffered. Christians will carefully guard their powder magazines.

James 1. 21

Watch Your Foreigners

Funny, isn't it?—to think of things that are perfectly natural to us as foreign—getting mad, being jealous, criticizing others, wanting things for ourselves—all foreign to God's life in us. Did you ever think that no foreigner ever seemed foreign to himself? So long as he is in his own land, among his own folk, his familiar customs, speech, and manners are perfectly understood. There he is not a foreigner; he is at home. The things that James says are foreign are perfectly familiar and customary in this world's life; but this new life we intend to live with Christ is that of another land—God's land. We must be naturalized. We must naturalize our tempers, our ambitions, our desires, our thoughts, and our habits. All these must be Christian in this new land of which we are now to be citizens. These are like some of our immigrants. They have not been naturalized very long. They are not entirely Christian—yet.

James says: Watch them, Americanize them, Christianize them. Keep them humble. See that they are willing to learn. Let them become Christlike. Not until they have become full citizens in this new land is the city of Mansoul safe.

James 1. 22-25

THE WELL-INTENTIONED LISTENER

Who would ever think of the heart that is willing to listen to God as among the possible enemies of his kingdom? However, many a Christian is a failure through merely listening and doing nothing. He listens to the preacher at church. He listens to the teacher in Sunday school. He listens to the leader in the young people's meeting. He listens to the Bible. He listens to his own conscience. Oh, he's a good listener but he never does anything!

This world has been made by doers, not by mere listeners. The doer may not be so well informed but he is more firmly intentioned. It is always easier to listen than to do. Some folks apparently think that they were born just to be hearers. There are persons who imagine that listening is Christian living—hearing sermons, listening to prayers and testimonies. That is no more living than sitting down listening to a foreman give orders is working! Action—decisive, fearless, sacrificial, Christian—moves this world. The real man Paul was shines out in the experience of the Damascus highway. Face to face with God—stupendous experience! Life's whole course changed in a moment! But for Paul the meaning of it all is fused into one dynamic word: "Do." "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to *do?*" Have you ever asked God that? The defense of Paul against the old doubts, the old habits, the old ambitions, was *do!*

James 1. 26, 27

BEING RELIGIOUS

What is it to be religious? To go to church? to pray? to give? to testify? to belong to the church? How this harks back to our first lesson together! It is to *be.* Religion, Christ's religion, is life, is being. It is more than

believing, more than feeling, more even than doing: it is being—living Christ—living Christ in our speech; living Christ in our brotherly service; living Christ in our kindness, in unselfishness, in purity of soul. This is the game we have studied through this entire chapter—to live the life of Christ, through Christ, for Christ.

Guideposts and Question Marks

Can you repeat offhand Micah's rules for the game of life? What is it to walk humbly with God?

Why is life's game so important that it is necessary for everyone to know its rules? What are the penalties of ignorance?

Why should any one play fair if cheating will win the game?

Give offhand Jesus' great rules for this game of life? The simple explanation given in this chapter? Do you agree with it? Is there any other you, personally, would add?

Why cannot rules enforce themselves? Which is better—to compel their observance by the authority of umpire or referee or to make them the very spirit of the players by their own agreement with them?

Will rules make a fair player? Why not? What will?

How did the Jew play the game? Where did he fail?

How did Jesus improve on it?

Can we be certain of goodness through our good intentions? How may we be sure?

What seems to you the most vital difference between Christianity and Judaism?

How may we bring Jesus Christ into our daily life?

Why is every form of social prejudice unchristian?

Why is it necessary to be on guard if we are to be free? What should we fear? What watch?

How may we naturalize our feelings and desires?

Can we be Christians unless we act?

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN'S PERSONAL IDEAL

Matt. 5. 3-12

Christ's Impossibles

The world has ever pronounced the principles enunciated by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount impossible. From the world's viewpoint they are. It is impossible to inherit the earth by meekness; impossible to obtain mercy by mercifulness; impossible to be pure of heart; impossible to count persecutions, revilings, and lies blessings; impossible to rejoice and be glad over such things as these. Impossibles, yet Jesus marked every one of these with his "blessed."

If these serve no other purpose they show us the vast difference that separates the ideals of Jesus Christ from those of this world. The two are diametrically opposed. It is possible to draw up a rival series of beatitudes from the world's point of view, every one of which will be a contradiction of one of Jesus' "blesseds."

How is this possible? How can thinkers find two points of view concerning the same things as far apart as these? Is the world right, and Jesus wrong? Is Jesus right, and the world wrong? May it not be that each position is extreme, and the real truth will be found between them?

A Practical Question for Christians

The nub of this question for the Christian is the fact that Jesus has made these impossibles the rule of life for his followers. If the question were merely one of theory, it would not be necessary to seriously concern ourselves about it; but if the ideals we must observe as Christians are practically impossible, then we must know it if we are to save ourselves from a hopeless, fatuous dream.

Which is really to be praised---aggressiveness or poverty of spirit? Is there any compensation in sorrow? Is it

possible to succeed by meekness? Is the quest of righteousness a fool's quest or life's wisest desire? Can the pure in heart really see God? Is there any reward in peacemaking? How many times men, confused, troubled, yet sincere, have asked questions like these?

The Direction of the Perspective

Perspectives begin with large things and end with little things. This is not because the things that seem to be the largest and the smallest really are what they seem; the real difference is in their distance from the eye that observes them. A penny an inch from the eye can blot out the sun, and many an ant hill has seemed larger than a mighty mountain merely because it was nearer. This mystery of perspective is a part of God's wisdom for man, marvelously arranging it so that the more there is to view, and the farther it is away, the more the eye can perceive. We owe more of the beauty we see in this world to this single fact than possibly we are aware.

The real difference between the world's view and Jesus' view is one of perspective. The perspective of the world is the normal, human, everyday perspective to which we are accustomed. Things are always largest which are nearest us, and smallest which are farthest from us. Self makes our familiar perspective. We think of this world in its relation to ourselves. The largest things to us, the things that have value for us, are those with which we are concerned. The small things, the inconsequential things, are those in which we have little interest or none at all. This works well with things, but Christianity is dealing with something greater than things: it is dealing with the soul and with God. These are in another plane—the plane of the spiritual. It demands a new perspective.

There was a time when men actually, seriously believed the earth to be the center of the universe! It seems incredible now, doesn't it? This planet of ours is one of the smallest satellites of our own great sun, itself dwarfed and insignificant in turn before other, mightier suns which make it seem a taper's flame. And we thought our earth was the center of it all, because it was ours, and we were on it.

I wonder if the time may come when our assumptions that base themselves upon the supreme centering of life in ourselves will not seem as ludicrous and incredible as this. In these ruling assumptions of the world we always assume that *we* are the center of the universe. Our race assumptions are, as a matter of course, that our race is the center of the universe; our class assumptions, that our class is first; our religious assumptions, that our little sect, our little branch of religion, must be the supremely important one. Why? Because it is *ours*. *We* are the center of the universe—to ourselves. Poor little we! How small we really are in God's vast universe, which we assume centers in our inconsequential selves!

The Real Center of the Universe

If our sun is not the center of the universe, which star is the real center? Ah, no star, even in the magnitudes of the sky, is capable of centering that maze of planets, that sea of worlds, that vast processional of the eternities. Only God can center that.

God centers everything. The physical laws that control this world are not centered in some point of leverage; his will centers them. The true perspective of life, in the vast spiritual plane, begins with God and ends with self instead of beginning with self and ending with God.

It is not true that might makes right, that possession is ownership, that heaven is on the side of the heaviest artillery, that fortune smiles on the fortunate. All these are snap judgments of truth. The real truth is with God and against the world's selfish centering of all things in itself. The world's possibles are untrue, Christ's impossibles true, because Jesus is God, and the world is man; and the truth is with God, not with man.

Gal. 6. 2

Perspectives Translated Into Laws

Wouldn't it be strange to have a law on the statute books commanding that we see the things nearest us large and that we see the things farthest away small? That surely would be a strange sort of a law. We do this naturally,

without compulsion. No law could ever change the way our eyes see; but it is necessary to change the way in which our hearts see. That perspective must be changed. The real solution for all the unrest of this world—for war, industrial bitterness, and international misunderstanding—is merely this: change the heart perspectives of men.

Self says: "Let the other fellow carry his own load. Pile your own on his shoulders, if you can, and make him carry that too"; God says: "Bear ye one another's burdens." That changes the perspective.

The Physical Burdens of Others

Very few of us could stand by and do nothing while another staggered down the street beneath a hopelessly crushing burden. We would spring to his help. Why? Because we are sufficiently Christianized for the loading of humans or even of beasts to the point of cruelty to touch our consciences.

The Social Burdens of Others

Conscience carries further than that: There is no community in a Christian land where, knowingly, a human being would be permitted to starve, freeze to death, or perish from disease simply because he had no money. Humanity would not suffer this. We need only knowledge to act immediately and generously in cases like these.

The Spiritual Burdens of Others

A writer recently mentioned what he named as "invisible cruelties." There are many such—industrial, social, political, spiritual. Many kind-hearted folks will bear the burden of the drunkard as to food, shelter, and clothing for his children, but not the burden of the drunkard himself. It is only within the immediate past that society has abandoned its futile policy of amelioration for that of prohibition in dealing with the problem of the drunkard. The sharpest test of the Christian conscience is the willingness to undertake the spiritual burdens of men, their self-imposed burdens of sins, failures, excesses, and follies.

Phil. 2. 5-11

Getting God's Perspective

How can I ever change this nature of mine? How can this natural, familiar, human perspective ever be changed into the perspective of God, so that I may see as God sees?

Manifestly this will be impossible so long as the center of my life remains self. Life must obtain a new center. In reality perspectives are in the minds of men, not in their eyes. Without the mind to organize and systematize and interpret those disturbances light sets up in the nerve periphery of the organ of sight all that we should have would be sensation. We need not a new eye but a new mind. It is the mind that makes feelings into thoughts, thoughts into philosophies, and philosophies into a universe of knowledge. A selfish mind will have a selfish perspective.

Obviously the remedy is to get a new mind, a new way of thinking. Paul therefore says: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Think of the burdens of life, the burdens of others, as Jesus thinks of them. When this happens, the impossibles become possibles.

The Mind of Christ

A wonderful description of this mind of Christ we have in this chapter from Philippians: the Christ, who is rightfully the equal of God, thinking about the world, thinking about mankind, thinking about us! This is the Beatitudes in action.

Of No Reputation

Men cling to the hope of fame. To be ignored is worse than death. There is no failure like obscurity, yet our Lord stoops from equality with the Creator of the universe to become the obscurest of the obscure. The world looks for the Messiah in a palace and finds him in a stable. The world expects a King and discovers a peasant. The world prophesies wealth and glory, and he comes to poverty. The world dresses its picture of the Coming One in the pomps of earthly pride; and when he comes, the very commonplace with which he cloaks his glory hides him

from the eyes that watch for him. God's choice of the form of his revelation—through the carpenter's Son, born in a stable, bred to poverty, acquainted with toil and grief, without place to lay his holy head—forever establishes God's personal attitude toward all those human values which the world praises and seeks.

The Form of a Servant

Pride is humanity's abiding sin. It is the root of caste. It is the foot rule of discrimination. It is the spring of social injustice. No man wishes to serve; every man wishes to be served. Even in our democratic society service carries with it a stigma. Our honors are all for the served. Seldom does the servant receive reward. Our America is like some vast ladder, up which we are all scrambling, eager to climb higher, ashamed to be found even where our fathers were yesterday. In a certain New York school the other day, in a composition, a little Italian boy wrote: "When I grow up I ain't going to dig in the ditch!" Day before yesterday the ditchdigger was a German, yesterday an Irishman, to-day the Italian: but who will dig our ditches to-morrow? So rapidly do we climb this vast ladder of success that it becomes necessary to import successive generations of hewers of wood and bearers of water to take the places of the generation just before them, now on its way up the ladder. The prize that induces this unparalleled progress and achievement in so few generations as to stagger mankind is there at the top of the ladder for the masters. But Jesus became the Servant and forever set his seal of truth on the high honor of the humblest service and the true worth of every faithful servant.

And Was Made a Man

Distinctions are always comparative and relative. Between an ape and a man the preference is with the man, but between man and the Son of God it is God who is preferred. Rather shocks us, doesn't it? It was quite as humiliating for God to become a man as for him to be born in a stable as an unknown Child of poverty. There is a higher evolution than the *genus homo:* there is the *genus*

spiritus. God's ladder of creation does not reach its final round here on earth; the top of the ladder touches heaven.

Humbling Man

Even humanity is not simple enough for the alphabet with which God would spell out his revelation of himself to this world. Earth doubtless would have imagined incarnation sufficient without the stable and the carpenter shop; God must dig underneath the lowest strata of humanity to find a fulcrum point from which to move the entire race. There is no human being too obscure for God, no human being beyond God's care; for he humbled himself.

Unto Death

How desperately life resists death! Death is the great negation of all for which life stands. It is the bitterest experience life knows. It is life's darkest fear. This great foe of mankind Jesus, for man's sake, must also face; and to the low portal of the tomb he bows his head, enters with man into the agony, fear, darkness and mystery of it all—unto death.

This is what the mind of Christ is: complete surrender, absolute unselfishness, unhesitating identification with each and every human being, regardless of human estimates.

The Drunkard and the Mind of Christ

For years earth's most pitiful symbol of misery, wretchedness, and downfall has been the drunkard. Let us pray that this symbol may soon pass and become obsolete; but for all the prohibition he is still here. He is the supreme symbol of all those social miseries which pluck the crown of glory from man's brow and which degrade him to the brute. All the disgust of sin, all its shame, its repulsiveness, are in this one word "drunkard."

What of the mind of Christ and this one?

That mind does not blink at his degradation, does not shrink from the horror of his pollution. That mind does not anxiously inquire, "What will they think?" That mind stoops to and befriends, identifies life with this horror of debauch—just because the mind is Christ's. All the magnitudes that bulk so largely in the world's scorn and

contempt for the drunkard are, for the mind of Christ, in the distance. That which the world scarcely perceives looms, for Christ, like mountains. That which repels the world attracts a Christ. The further down this drunkard is, the more degraded and disgusting he is, the more imperative his needs are for Christ. The mind of Christ is the only corrective man knows for this world's false way of thinking about these miserables; for this is God's way, the true way.

The Coronation of Humiliation

The strangest thing about such an attitude as this, such an act toward one so repulsive, is that it carries its own reward with it. If the first part of our Scripture from Philippians carries us down into the depths of humiliation, the remainder of it carries us up golden stairs of glory toward the eternal rewards of God.

The First Step: Humiliation, Exaltation

The door of Joseph's tomb was Jesus' portal to glory. The transition in the story begins with the moment they laid that poor, bruised, pierced body in the niche in the rock. That is the nadir of Christ's humiliation. From that moment God's unconquerable life rises toward the eternal glory. No life ever for love's sake stooped to the final depth of humiliation without a corresponding exaltation. Livingstone goes to serve black savages and spends a lifetime in hardship, poverty, and loneliness, to rest his bones in Westminster Abbey, and to write his name in letters of living light across the great black continent. Washington becomes the archrebel of England's American colonies to father earth's greatest Republic. Florence Nightingale humbles herself to those wretched, filthy, vermin-infested soldiers who are dying for the lack of proper care, and becomes the Angel of the Crimea. Jerry McAuley stoops to saving "bums" in Water Street and becomes a latter-day saint. These cases are not exceptional; they are typical. The thing works everywhere, anywhere.

The Second Step: Obscurity, Fame

He made himself of no reputation, but God gave him a

name above every other name. Some of us are so busy making a reputation that we forget that God is the only real Maker of fame. In old New England graveyards the slate tombstones upon which other generations inscribed the deeds and praises of their dead are suffering the slow erasure of time. After a little while every praise men chiseled there will have fallen before the pitiless chisel of the years. There is no eternity of fame in tombstones. The fame men achieve passes sooner or later; the fame God gives endures forever. The Lamb's book of life will be legible long after Burke's *Peerage* and *Who's Who* have been forgotten. Don't be afraid that the service of need, that identification with wretchedness, will spoil your reputation. If it can be spoiled that easily, it isn't worth preserving. If it is worth while, your reputation is safe with God so long as you are with God, and his mind is in you.

The Third Step: Servant, Ruler

Jesus put to a literal test his theory, "Whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." The towel-girt, foot-washing Christ has become the mighty Potentate of time. The sole authority for rulership is service. Rule upon any other authority is usurpation. The only divine right of power is its right to serve. That is power's only right to rule, the only right money has to authority, the only claim that a majority ever has to rule over a minority. Civilization is turning in this hour upon this very issue. The right of masses to power is no more justifiable than the right of classes to power on the mere ground of what they are. Proletariats can be as selfish as the *bourgeoisie*. They justify themselves only as they serve. They are justified as humanity's servant, not as a class. The peril of the class in power to-day is not that it is a class, but that it has not served the whole of humanity.

We must frame a world where power serves instead of exploits. The peril of power is in its refusal to serve, in its insistence that it be served. That claim imperils humanity always. Our Lord bases authority where God bases it —upon service. Jesus, humbling himself to be a Servant, is exalted of God until, at his name, every knee must bow, every tongue confess; not because he is God's Son, but

because God's Son served. When we serve we prepare ourselves to rule.

John 2. 3-6

The Practical Idealism of Love

The Bible is the world's greatest romance. In comparison with it the little, foolish popular novels, which essay to treat of love, are as thimbles to the eternal oceans. Young folks laugh at love. To them it seems a funny thing, a thing about which to tease self-conscious, embarrassed lovers. After a while we will know what love truly is. Love isn't "dates" and boxes of candy and flowers and automobile rides. Father and mother abandoned those things long ago as the only expression of love; yet they love. For them love has been chiefly mutual surrender, the willingness to give up personal desires and plans for the sake of each other, for the home's sake, for their children's sake, for you. This is sweeter love than youth ever knew. You will never know the sacrifices they have made to provide a home for you, to clothe you, feed you, educate you; but those sacrifices have deepened, have sweetened, the love between your parents. There is a further step in love. Perhaps you are able to understand this better than your parents. The highest love is not even that of mutual sacrifice and self-denial; it is the love that finds its spring and source in obedience. Most of what we call love for our fathers and mothers is just shallow sentiment or selfish strategy, which hopes to gain dividends on professed affection. Real love, the kind of love which grips our hearts whenever we think of father or mother, is the love that finds its joy in obeying that father or mother not because they compel it but because obedience is a duty we owe them; because obedience is the best way in which we can tell them that we truly love them.

There is a fine illustration of this principle which comes out of these recent days of war. For years we Americans have talked about our love for our country, and we meant it. We did love this wonderful, glorious America of ours; but it was so easy to be sentimental about the flag and the old Liberty Bell and democracy. Then war came, and the call of the Nation, and bloodshed, and graves under the

white crosses of Château-Thierry and the Argonne. It was so our generation learned, as our fathers had learned in other days, that real patriotism was not Fourth-of-July talk; it was the willingness, if need be, to obey the Nation, though that obedience might cost us our very lives. There is a depth of meaning to love of country like that which the other cannot know. That kind of love is safe to build upon. It talks but it does not exhaust itself in oratory. It lives, it serves, it obeys!

John 3. 1-3, 16

The Goal of the Christian

Discipleship is at one and the same time a marvelous privilege and a puzzling mystery. Why should God ever call such beings as we are sons? We shall live only three score years or more. What is this tiny span of life to God's millenniums? Why should God love us? The world has no praise for this sonship with him. About the most meaningless thing to the world is Christian discipleship. That has no part, no place, in its scheme of things. It praises the warrior, it gives wealth and honor to success, it applauds its entertainers; but it counts the Christian a fool. It cannot understand him, does not wish to understand him. The world is not going our way. It counts our sacrifices our follies. It calls our devotion fanaticism.

But where *are* we going? Where does all our sacrifice, our denial, our unworldly point of view, lead us? What are we trying to become? We have deliberately accepted a life the world discounts, a life unprofitable from a selfish viewpoint. What is the end of it?

No man is quite able to tell you, but we know this: Whatever we may become we are trying to become Christ-like. We have accepted his rule of life. We are trying to live by his perspective, to grow like him.

Secretly every Christian knows that Jesus is his model. Every one of us has some hero, someone we are imitating. That some one may be a teacher or a parent or a friend. It may be some celebrity. However great these examples may be which inspire us, there is a greater: The greatest pattern life knows is the life of Jesus Christ. When we

try to imitate others we try to walk as they walk or talk as they talk or dress as they dress. These are human distinctions. Jesus' distinction is that crystal-pure heart of his. The surest way to be Christlike is to be pure as he is pure. This will mean continual cleansing. When a druggist wishes the purest possible solution he passes it again and again through the filter, each filtering removing a certain portion of the impurities, until it is at last as pure as he can make it. Pass your life through the filter of Christ-likeness. Once will not be enough. Try it again and again and again until, as nearly as mere humanity may be, you at last are Christlike.

The Final Proof of an Ideal

During the war there came into use, as the accepted definition of death in battle, the phrase "the supreme sacrifice." No greater sacrifice certainly could be made than this—to die for a cause, for an ideal. Death, unalterable, final, is the supreme proof of loyalty and love. God gave us this final proof in the death of our Saviour on the cross of Calvary. It is now for us to give this supreme proof of our love for him not by some fanatical martyrdom, not by beds of spikes and fearful flagellations, like those of the devotees of India, but by sacrificial spirit in all our living. Humanity begins to flower when men demonstrate their willingness to die for great ideals. The church of to-day is the fruit of the martyrs. The new power of Christianity in China is the outcome of Christian martyrdoms during the days of the Boxers. Let the ideal of Christ so bind you to the burdens and needs of men that you literally die under these, and your ideal is proved beyond all question. Christianity is not a dilettante, self-pleasing, soft-living cult. It is a faith that drives men to die when the needs of the world demand it; which impels men to sacrifice by the very spirit that is within it. It stoops to conquer. It gives to gain. It serves to save. Wherever you find Christianity in power you find it doing this thing. Wherever you find it powerless you find it shunning sacrifice. Our final proof to this world that we come from God, that we go to God, is not in our theology, our ecclesiasticisms, our millions of Christians, our power as a great social ideal;

the final proof of Christianity is the cross in the heart of man and, because of that, in the heart of the world, as it was before time in the heart of God himself.

Guideposts and Question Marks

Is it possible to live Christ's impossibles? Test each of them by the opinion of the class as to their verdict.

What is the real reason for the world pronouncing them impossible?

Where does the world place the impossibility? In the will? In the heart? In the mind? Where?

If it is necessary for things closest to us to be seen in their relation to ourselves, why not things of character, of social relations, as well?

What is wrong with making self the criterion of all problems we must face?

Why is it that the rules of self will not work successfully in the spiritual life?

Why are we conscious of our responsibilities for the hunger and other physical needs of men, but not for their spiritual needs?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to humble himself to such extremes of humiliation in his coming to earth?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to go to the extreme of death? Could he not have stopped short of that?

Was Jesus' exaltation merely the resumption of his former place and powers, or was it in any way a consequence of his obedience to the will of God?

What is it to love God? How do we demonstrate our affection?

What is the final proof of loyalty to Christ's ideal?

CHAPTER X

THE CHRISTIAN'S BOOK

The Greatest Treasury in the World

If you were to go to the treasury in Washington, they would show you the great vaults where the Nation keeps millions, perhaps billions, in gold and silver—the treasure of our country. In the city of London, in the Tower, if you are fortunate, you may see where the crown jewels of the British Empire are kept under the most intricate of locks—perhaps the most marvelous collection of gems in the whole world; jewels with the most romantic history, some of them of priceless value. Elsewhere in this world there are other treasuries with gems, precious metals, costly fabrics, historic relics, in their keeping. However, all these are insignificant in value when compared with the world's greatest treasury, the Bible.

It has taken hundreds of years for the world to accumulate its present store of gold. Some of it came from centuries of seeking, gathered, some of it, by the servants of King Solomon in his mines in Africa. Some of it is the toll of centuries of oppression in India, the hoard of rajah and conqueror. Painfully, slowly, it grows from year to year, but even all the gold the world has gathered after these centuries would make a pitifully small measure were it pressed into one solid cube.

It has taken the world longer than this to find out about God. All this world knows about God it has painfully acquired out of centuries of seeking. For many centuries men worshiped sticks and stones and serpents and beasts, thinking these to be God. For many other centuries men crouched at the rumbling of the thunder, trembled at the lightning's flashing, thinking these the voice and earth-hurled spear of angered Deity. How long it took for men to dully comprehend that God was not as man—capricious, fickle, vengeful! Many generations had to pass before we

human beings discovered there was just one God, and this One not the Deity for little Palestine alone, but of the whole earth, of all mankind. It has taken two thousand years of the knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ and his revelation to bring this world to what we know when we pray, as he taught us, "Our Father."

Such hard-won treasure is not to be despised. It is stained with the tears of the ages. It is worn by the touch of millions. It bears the superscription of man's hope. We could well-nigh sacrifice all the remainder of this world's treasure for this. The marvel of it is that this, the world's greatest treasury, is not under lock and key and guard; it is freely yours if you are willing to accept it.

A Draft on the Treasury

Even though you are a citizen of the United States of America you cannot, on the strength of that fact, walk up to the treasury in Washington and demand any of its silver or gold or even its paper certificates; you must have a personal claim, fully justified, before any of the treasure can be yours. It is so with the treasury of the Book. The Bible will never be worth much to you until you have a personal claim upon it. The question for the Christian is this: How may he obtain this personal claim and enter into this treasure God intends to be his?

Matt. 4. 1-11

The Young Man Who Faced a Great Question

Perhaps the greatest question youth must face is what it will do with life. It is an awesome thing to stand on life's threshold, pondering over the problem of what you intend to be, realizing that on the decision may depend not only life's success but its happiness as well.

How hard it is to decide what to do with one's life! Which shall it be—business? profession? trade? what? It is a wonderful thing to have a life to spend—a whole life to spend. Some of us never look into the faces of youth without the sudden realization that our lives are waning. These eager-faced, wide-awake, ambitious young folks have *all* their lives before them,—whole lives to spend

—and we have already spent at least half of ours. There never was such a world in which to spend a life as this to-day. Where opportunity touched our fathers' world tenfold it touches ours a hundredfold. What are you going to do with your life?

Some, facing that question, are saying: "I have a talent for business and I intend to be rich"; "I have a talent for law and I will be a lawyer"; "I have a talent for music and will become a musician"; a talent for art, a talent for society. How rich we are—for ourselves! How many of us, I wonder, are saying, like that young Man of Nazareth, "I have a talent for God"?

Have you ever thought that the real meaning of this wilderness temptation in Jesus' life was that it was his own facing of this very question you are facing? What must he do with his life? Life was as sweet to him as to you. He felt the same ambitions you feel. The same voices were whispering in his ear which sound in yours, telling of wealth, of fame, of position, of power, of ease, of pleasure. He too felt the swift transiency of life. Once spent, the treasure could never be restored. How, then, spend it so as to realize the most from life for the world, for himself, for his Father?

Jesus had just come from that extraordinary experience of the Jordan. That was the great crisis in his life. Some of you have come to it when God has spoken to you concerning his will for your life. You can understand what the revelation of the Jordan meant to our Lord. All his life he had known that consciousness of a special relation to this marvelous, unseen Father. As a boy in the Temple that consciousness had been so strong that he felt impelled to be about this Father's business. Undoubtedly he had heard many times from Mary's lips the marvelous story of his birth, of God's intervention, which had saved his life from Herod's hideous purpose. At the Jordan it is not with that which others have told him, with dim feelings within himself, our Lord must reckon: it is with God's personal call to him, with God's personal revelation to him of whom he, Jesus, really was: Messiah! God's Son! the Deliverer! Dimly through the earlier years he had been conscious of this; here, at the Jordan, it becomes a

mighty revelation with which he must reckon. He has met the great question of life and now he must settle it. Upon the way in which he settles the question the destiny of a world must turn. And he goes away into the wilderness that he may fight the battle through.

The Panoply of the Christian

In the sixth chapter of Ephesians Paul described the armor a Christian soldier ought to wear. It is worth reading in connection with this story of the battle in the wilderness. Jesus went to battle as a soldier should, fully panoplied. If ever there was a lesson given in the Bible which teaches the importance of a knowledge of the Book, it is this of the temptation. Jesus' protection is not in some hastily snatched knowledge of the Word; it is like the armor men wore in the old knightly days—each piece forged separately by a cunning armorer, tempered and strengthened to the utmost against the day of battle. The panoply of the Young Man Christ had been forged and shaped by years of godly training and knowledge of God's Word. Now, in the hour of need, he is armed and ready. Do you meet your temptations so? Is your life defended by the knowledge of the truth in God's Book? If not, let this set your purpose to arm yourself in these days of peace against the future days, when the enemy comes.

Does God wish me to consecrate my life to the mission battle? Does God wish me to give my life to the mission field? to the ministry? to the work of a deaconess? to special work for him anywhere? How God's will for us and the will of self strive together, sometimes to very agony! Perhaps this will help us to understand that vaster struggle through which Jesus passed. We too have heard the whisper of the tempter. Sometimes he whispers of fortune, sometimes of pride, of pleasure, many times of doubt. Always he resists God's will for you. Somewhere in the armor of your soul is the open joint through which he may drive home to your very soul. If I mistake not, the joint in Christ's armor which the enemy sought first was the question whether or not the amazing revelation of himself could be true.

The Peril of a Doubt

Doubts are subtle things even in the life of Christ. An easy, practicable solution was ready at hand for this baffling, disturbing question of identity: why not settle the matter for all time and easily? Here is hunger: yonder are the round stones of the wilderness. If you ever have looked into the windows of a Jewish bakeshop you found there, if your eyes were open, a practical commentary on this temptation of the bread and the stones. "If thou be," whispers the tempter: prove the fact by the use of Messias' power. You are hungry: how like to bread the shape of these stones on the ground about you! Turn them into bread—that will settle the question.

Surely there is no harm in a simple experiment like this when one is hungry and has a doubt to satisfy. Why not? Many of us have fallen before as innocent a question as this seems to be. But our Lord is panoplied. Like a knight of old, in full mail, he is protected by hardened steel at every vulnerable point. Knowledge he has drawn from this old-time treasury we have talked about is his defense. Immediate with the subtle dart of tempting thought is the defending "It is written." Have you ever thought what might have happened to a world, to the plans of God, had Jesus failed here? Suppose he had known no more of the Book than, perhaps, yourself: could he have conquered?

Three times the enemy assails our Lord: first, through the suggestion of a simple though really perilous experiment—perilous because it springs from selfish need, because it admits the doubt; secondly, through the very faith that defended his heart from the first attack, but a faith as foolish, as selfish, as the doubt of the first temptation; lastly, through the possibility of accepting the easier, human interpretation of Messiahship to the denial of God's great sacrificial purpose in it. Jesus was keen-sighted. He understood men. He knew perfectly the low level of the popular idea about Messiahship. Had he yielded to that, he might have avoided a cross and won a petty throne; but he would have lost a world. Each attack flattens its spear point on the chilled steel of Scripture: "It is written." This Man is armed by the Book. Are you?

John 5. 39

Is It God's Book?

Did God write it? or men? In reality is the Bible any different from other holy books of rival religions, from the Koran? the writings of Confucius? the Hindu Upanishads? What a battle royal has raged over this question! How the Book has been torn and shredded and reclassified and divided! What is the truth? Can we still believe that it is truly God's Book? Can we still think that in it we have eternal life?

Doubtless the opinions of men have changed about it from time to time, but there is nothing sacred about opinions. We do not look at the Bible to-day as did the men in Wesley's day, nor did they look at it as the men of Luther's time, nor those grim warriors of the Reformation as Peter and Paul thought of it. Opinions change, but the Book survives. Men are always under the necessity of changing their opinions as the knowledge of the world continues to grow. They have changed their ideas about the most important things man knows: about the sun, about the earth and its shape, about the solar system, about the length of time, about the evolution of life. These changes make for a more rational grasp of the facts of this universe but they haven't changed the universe. So it is with the Book: The Bible is still God's Book, still the treasury of life. After all our investigations, researches, and critical studies we are sure that the Bible is something more than a Hebrew myth or the Hebrew edition of some ancient world myth. In it there is inherent power, not of human knowledge but of God. Its effects in all ages, among all peoples, through all the transitions of human opinion, are too unquestioned, too evidently supernatural in character, to be attributed merely to the power of human ideas. The Bible is the greatest testimony to God, to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to the human possibility of experience and salvation, which man knows.

Rom. 15. 1-16

The World's Case Book on God

The greatest human record extant is that of the Bible.

It is the greatest compilation of human experience which man has ever published. It is the age-long story of human experiment with the belief in God. It verifies its facts by centuries of experimentation. It compasses the wide range of human experience in its relations with God. There is not another book in the world like it.

Doubtless some of you who study this little volume are or have been students of chemistry. You recall that old laboratory notebook, with its record of your experiments. You are not very proud of those first pages. How little you know of principles and formulæ! Those first experiments were pretty crude, weren't they? You always turn those pages hurriedly until you reach the later records, where you were surer, and better understood what you were about, what you were trying to prove. Try this on the Book. Think of your Bible as humanity's notebook in which the men of the ages have written down their experiments in the great laboratory of life. Perhaps, like yours, the earlier pages are a bit uncertain, the problems difficult; but as you read them over, out of the surer truth of a larger experience you can see that the truth with which they deal is the truth we know, with which we deal: the truth of God—what he is, what he does, how he feels toward men, what he wills!

How the Bible Came to Be

Romans tells us that the most precious truth man knows is this concerning God and concerning our lives and God. Jealously men have treasured everything that has ever been discovered in this field. This is why we have always had priests and prophets and ministers and temples and churches and religions.

So much depends on this knowledge—success, happiness, salvation, faith, and comfort. The darkest human problems—those of misfortune, sorrow, sin, and death—come back to it. Each generation has sought to pass on as a priceless legacy to the one following it the knowledge to which it fell heir and which it has gained. It is of this Paul is thinking when he writes, in Romans, that these things "were written for our learning, that through pa-

tience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." The God who put his instinct in this human heart is surely far more concerned with this true knowledge about himself as it has come down through the ages than with those faint glimmerings of the truth which, in reality, only obscure it for men. Obviously this Book is not an accident; man's experience of God has given birth to it, and under his will, inspired by his Spirit, this Book has lived and grown and survived through the vicissitudes of time.

Here we have set down life's surest knowledge about God and man, life and death, sin and salvation,—a literal treasury of human experience from the first faint consciousness the race ever knew of God to the glorious revelation of himself as an incarnate Saviour. The Bible is not a history, not a biography, not a treatise on theology. It is neither a philosophical work nor a textbook on science. It is man's case book of experience with God.

Many books have been written giving man's theories about God; this Book records man's discoveries of God. The story of the garden is the ever-familiar story of human experimentation with conscience and the discovery of sin and sin's penalty. Noah experiments with faith, and Abraham, and Moses, and Gideon, and David, and Hezekiah. Sin, doubt, selfishness, cruelty, love, despair, peril, safety, —how the marvelous fabric of human experience is woven into every page of this Book! Reading it, studying it, we find how other men found God in hours like our own. Do you wonder that it is precious, loved? that men have defended it, preserved it, and multiplied it, until it is to-day the world's best seller?

2 Tim. 3. 14-17

Building on the Book

Perhaps you say, "But I don't enjoy reading the Bible." You might as well say, "I don't enjoy reading English literature"; or, "I do not care for the public library." I can imagine that if, by mistake, you found your way to the shelves of theology or philosophy or some dry-as-dust books on statistics, you might possibly think that even the public

library was dull. Remember, the Bible is more than a book: it is a library.

Do you enjoy romance, adventure? This Book is full of it. Read Rebekah's love story, or Ruth's. Read of Gideon's battles and Jephtha's and those of Samson Strong Heart, of Prince Saul, and Brave Jonathan, and David the Hero.

Are you fond of poetry? Some of the greatest poetry of all time is in the Bible, in the Psalms, the world's first anthology.

Are you fond of the drama? Study Job. It is greater in its dramatic power than the story of Lear. Turn to Esther and its marvelous contrasts of favor and fortune, or follow the story of Saul or of Ahab.

If you like history, read Kings and Chronicles, where the age-long story of the rise and fall of empire is set forth as in few records of human history. If you like biography, try the Gospels. Treat the Book as a library, not as a single volume. Buy a copy of it in modern English, such as Moffatt's translation of the New Testament, and you will discover that you hold a new wealth of interest in your hands.

But the Bible is more than merely a volume to interest one, like the latest novel on your library table. It is more than the textbooks that you have used in high school or college. It is a Book to live by, to build a life upon, to furnish life "unto every good work."

You will not be able to master this Book in a week, a month, or a year. There are innumerable vistas in it. There are beauties it holds which you will not discover until you have traversed the regions where they are found many times. There are places like that here in our America. There are spots I love to revisit for the sake of freshening the impressions they have already made. I always find something new in them. The Bible is like that. One view never exhausts nature, nor this Book. It is like the ocean—unfathomable. All our little sounding lines are incapable of reaching its deeper levels. Then sorrow comes, or misfortune, or bitter, cruel failure, and the lines in our hands are lengthened; the plummet sinks into deeps we never knew were there before, in this Book, and there is blessing for the hour which must find God. You must

live with the Book as you must live with the sea, with the mountains, if you would build it into your life.

Have You Signposts in Your Bible?

Have you ever motored over an unfamiliar highway and possibly come to some four corners, without even a single signboard to tell you which way you should go? How annoying and confusing it is! What a joy it is to drive over roads you know well, turning to right and to left with the familiar landmarks, reviving the memories of earlier visits, renewing acquaintance with well-loved spots! How rich life grows!

A Bible should be like that—a book with signposts and thoroughfares through it, with old, remembered trails leading to places we will ever treasure, such as Jacob's Bethel, where we, like the youth of that night, met God. Most folks have no thoroughfares through their Bibles. The moment they venture away from the great, familiar highways it becomes an impenetrable wilderness. Somewhere in the wilds there is a spot you would find again—a loved verse—but it is a hopeless quest. There are no signposts in the Book.

In the woods a good scout marks his trail by blazes on the trees so that he can find his way again. Blaze your way through this Book. Mark the verse and the chapter that spoke to your heart from God. Underline and footnote and connect the vital verses of a chapter, until the gist of it belongs to you. Date the verses that have proven revelations of God in your experience. Make your Bible the case book of your own, personal experience with God. Begin it now. You will never regret it. Transfer the record from Bible to Bible as they successively wear out, until your Book becomes your personal treasury as well as that of the ages. Let it wear out. That is what Bibles are for, like shoes and railroad rails and picks and shovels. Wear them out and, as they wear, grow yourself.

1 Peter 1. 25 to 2. 3

How to Get Into Your Bible

All through this chapter we have called the Bible a

treasury. Treasuries hint at shining gold and glistering silver and flashing gems, of fortune and luxury. There is a better, homelier word to describe this marvelous Book. The Bible is a pantry, God's pantry. Most of us know more about pantries than we do about treasuries. We are familiar with them. We have them ourselves. Pantries are places in which to keep food; and the Bible is food—God's food—for the human soul. Many of us have never learned how to open this pantry and how to obtain food from it for our souls. We stand before its closed door and starve.

The food is there, but we do not know where to find it. It is like being invited to enter a great warehouse stocked with provisions but so myriad in number that we are hopelessly confused by their very profusion. We can think of numberless things we wish to eat but do not know where they may be found. Many there are who sorrow, troubled of heart, hungry of spirit, who do not know the ways of the Book.

Will you permit me to help you? There is a very simple way to get into this Book. It was written for simple, everyday folks. You don't need a theological education in order to understand the Bible. Let me help you in:

What is this chapter you have just been reading? What is it about? Can you discover its subject? Who were the persons named in it? What was their business or calling? Why were they mentioned? Was it for our example or warning? What does this chapter teach us about God? about Jesus Christ? about heaven? about prayer? about loving God, living for God? Which verse do you think is the best verse? Why? What is there in this chapter which will help you? Can it teach you anything about God which you did not know, personally, before? about man's privileges with God? duties to God? God's promises to men? Is there any verse in this chapter which speaks personally to you? Measure yourself by this chapter. Where can it help you? Personalize every promise, every warning, every prayer, every duty, until you know what the Book is saying to *you!*

Touring God's Wonderland

Most motorists prefer a carefully planned tour to mere

wandering. Aimless Bible reading is like aimless touring —it gets nowhere. Have a plan. God's wonderland is before you. Don't live in a valley when God has prepared heights of glory and vast plains of truth for your conquering. Make your plan for a year. Mechanical reading, from cover to cover, has little inspiration in it. Spend this year with the history of the Bible. Study it. Master it. Make the story of Israel's beginnings, the founding of the kingdom, the great division, the captivity, the restoration, as familiar as the history of England or of France or of America; but study more than mere chronicles of history. See God in the history, as he is in all history, even our own. Spend a year with the Gospels. Get Speer's little book *The Man Christ Jesus* and live with the human Christ until you never can forget his face. Take up the book of Acts and the romance of Christian beginnings. Tarry with the prophets: they are up-to-date reading for to-day. Wait in wonder before Genesis. Journey with Exodus. Stand amazed in the portrait gallery of Hebrews. Let the stupendous imagery of Revelation fill your soul (but don't try to put a time stamp upon it!).

Let each day have its own portion of the Book. We need food three times a day. As Mark Guy Pearse once said in homely phrase, "Why not get a bit of dinner for the soul?" Read a small portion, preferably a chapter. Digest it. Feed upon it. Master it and make it your own. Let it enter into your life. Let its strength and vision pass into your own, and you will be fed. For the Christian who knows the Book in this personal, vital way it is never closed, but for him it is a speaking, living Book—the Book of Life!

Guideposts and Question Marks

Why is the Bible a treasury? Is there anything of eternal value in the Book?

What is the surest way of securing a draft on this treasure?

Why is the question of a lifework the greatest question youth must face? Ought we to settle it without God's help? Ought we to refuse to hear what God wants us to do with our lives?

Which of the three temptations in the wilderness do you think was the most difficult for Jesus?

Was it merely a memoriter knowledge of the Bible, remembering the right text to use, which gave him the victory in the temptation? If not, what?

Are we ever tempted to do the thing self desires rather than God purposes? How can we resist? Will the Bible help?

Can we be useful, strong, and successful Christians unless we know our Bibles?

Name as many familiar, human experiences with God found in the Bible as you can. Which is the nearest to any experience of your own?

Why was it necessary for the Bible to grow slowly through years? Why did not God inspire men to produce it in the beginning for all time?

Did the process that produced the Bible end with the book of Revelation? Is it going on now?

Why does the Bible seem dull? What is the most interesting book to you? character? incident?

How should a Bible be marked to make it useful?

How would you use the Bible practically to get help for your own religious life?

Will a person who does not believe in God, who does not accept Jesus Christ, get anything out of the Bible simply studying it for error and opportunity for criticism? What is the best commentary on the Bible? (Your life.)

CHAPTER XI

THE CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO SERVICE

Matt. 10. 5-42

Christ's Apprentices

In Jesus' day there was only one way by which a trade might be learned. There were none of our modern trade schools and technical high schools and institutes of technology. The trades must be learned where they were practiced and by apprenticeship to men who had mastered them. They taught the apprentice all they had learned by years of hard experience, and so, in turn, he became a master and the instructor of other apprentices. Not a bad method even to-day!

Jesus recognized that men and women cannot become Christians merely by instruction nor can they continue to be Christians without practice. Christianity is more than knowledge or even faith. It is life; and to live as a Christian it is necessary for us to master the Christian way of living. You might master theology and still know comparatively little about Christianity. It would be like taking a correspondence course in electrical engineering without shop practice. You might know the Bible by heart and be utterly unskillful in living it. You might familiarize yourself with the principles of Christian ethics and not be a loving Christian.

Christianity is a craft, a trade. Its tools are life, our hands, our lips, our eyes, our ears, our minds, our hearts. We know how to use these tools mentioned as human beings but do we know how to use them as Christians? Christianity is a craft that has mastered Christ's way of using eyes, ears, lips, mind, and heart. There's as much difference between their Christian use and merely their human use as between the methods of a trained mechanic and a beginner.

How, then, may we master this trade of the Christian?

In the same way the disciples mastered it—by serving, as they served, as Christ's apprentices, beginning, as they began, with simple deeds of helpfulness and kindness rendered in Christ's name.

Life's Living Use

There are just two things we can do with our lives: we can use them for ourselves or we can use them for others. Jesus tells us that using life for ourselves is losing life, that using life for others in service and sacrifice, while it may seem to be the veritable loss of that life, is in reality its saving. Life was made for service, not selfishness. This is why selfishness is always loss. There is a strange law of life which, for the sake of the living, inevitably destroys that which is not used for life. Whenever a living thing ceases to have a living purpose, the process of disintegration and dissolution immediately begins, whether the thing is a body or a soul. You can hoard gold but not seed, for the living seed must germinate, or decay. Only inert, dead, ended things can be hoarded. You can keep a mummy but not a carcass. You can put diamonds into a vault safely but not a soul. You must use life for the purposes for which God fashioned it or pay the penalty by losing it.

Mark 10. 35-40

The Cost of Living

We have given "H. C. of L." a place in literature. A generation from now college students will be puzzling their brains over these cabalistic letters discovered in the literary remains from our days. However puzzling they may prove to those future students, they are perfectly intelligible to persons living now. There is a higher cost to living, however, than merely that of food, shelter, clothing, or pleasure—the cost of living itself.

What is life worth? This bit of reddened clay, touched for a moment by a magic wand and in that moment projecting its gaze beyond the farthest star before the living force within it fails, and it is dust again—what is its

worth? Life is the costliest thing this planet knows. No scientist can give the exact number of years God has taken to bring life to its present state of perfection, but we know that our life as it is represents innumerable generations of living and hoping and striving and praying. The value of life isn't in its raw material. Valued as an animal, the ox, the horse, have the better of us. The value of life isn't in the fact that we are alive. Existence costs comparatively little. It is living that costs. It doesn't cost much to sit at Christ's right hand or his left. The cost comes in qualifying to sit there. It was this which Zebedee's wife didn't understand. To sit in honor with Christ we must trust God when all other help fails. We must expend life and means and time and strength until we are well-nigh exhausted. We are more likely to become acquainted with crosses than crowns, with Christ's cup than Christ's seat. Apprentices do not know this, think of this. They are dreaming of becoming their own masters. They are already counting their wages as journeymen; but the apprentice who has become a master knows perfectly well that living must be paid for out of sweat and weariness, even though you are a master.

Mark 10. 41-45

Paying for Your Own Reward

It was a strange reward Jesus offered his disciples. To be great meant to serve, to be honored meant to be humbled, to be master meant to be servant. What a topsy-turvy world this is to which our Lord introduces us! All the familiar emoluments of high position and authority are discounted. Why be chief if not to command? Why be great if not to be distinguished from the little, the obscure? Who in such a world, then, would seek for honor or accept lordship?

Our Lord is not mad. These things are strange to us, as they were to those first disciples, because they are not the custom of the world we know so well. Christian living is different from other living. Its measures are different. The world measures greatness by contrast. It must have the myriad poor to offset the glory of the few rich. It must

have its thousands of unknown to mark the distinction of its famous ones. In a thousand ways the world sets its discriminations, its limitations, its selections and exclusions, its recognitions, and its snubs and slights against the masses of humanity, that its favorites may be recognized, and their superiority demonstrated. Out of this unchristian spirit grows that selfish, hateful system of caste and privilege the world has now disowned and the newer selfishness of attempted class rule we are fighting to overthrow. Against all such the Christian spirit arrays itself and must fight until these be conquered, and the rule of love enthroned.

Service is never a reward for selfishness, only for unselfishness. For the life that dares the great ideal of Christ service is its own reward. It is this fact that so strikingly reveals itself in the life of every greater lover of humanity. A Livingstone finds in the hardships of an African missionary rewards vaster than the diamonds of Kimberley, and a Jerry McAuley in Water Street is earning larger dividends on his life than the million-makers of Wall Street.

Sacrifice Without Publicity

It's easy to be a martyr—where the world can see you! Obscurity reduces the premium on martyrdom. Only a real martyr or a fool is willing to die without attention. It is easier, in truth, to go as a missionary than remain at home as an unappreciated Sunday-school teacher. The costliest sacrifices made are those for apparently inconsequential things. How disappointing were the answers of John the Baptist to the questions of those eager folks who listened to his preaching and came demanding what they should do! What possible glory was there in giving away a spare coat? in feeding the tramp at the door because he was hungry, and you had enough and to spare? in being an honest taxgatherer and asking no more than the assessment? in being orderly, obedient soldiers? Had John proclaimed a crusade to deliver Judah from the hands of Rome, these men would have died at his command. Whether his questioners were willing to live at his command—to serve in kindly, obscure, unselfish ways—we

do not know. This kind of service is seldom popular. There seems to be too little of the heroic about it.

Have you ever asked yourself what it was that Jesus did during those three brief years he wrought out his earthly ministry? Name the great things, the outstanding things, the notable things, which he did. To attempt to do so will surprise you by the discovery of how apparently unimportant the things were to which he gave himself so largely those three years he had to serve. He laid his hands on a few sick folks and made them well. He opened a few blind eyes, unstopped a few deaf ears. He spent his precious years in doing these apparently inconspicuous things which we are prone to shun. Even his death was contemptible in the eyes of his age. But those years changed the currents of human history, set in motion the forces of a new civilization, discovered principles that have become the substance of government, planted the seeds of future human movements, and tempered the world's selfishness with a new warmth of sympathy. It isn't measures but principles that count when you deal with living powers. You cannot predict a Kant from the circumference of the boy Kant's head. You cannot prophesy a Washington from his genealogy. Genius still escapes the analysis of the laboratory. The essence of Christianity is still a mystery, but we do know that whenever Christian principle touches the littles, the inconsequentials, the obscure things, they become mightier than any earthly measures of power.

John Baptist and You

Suppose that fiery, shaggy prophet of the wilderness, John Baptist, stood in the streets of your town crying, "Prepare! Repent! The Kingdom is at hand!" What would you do? What answer would those persons make whose stock response everywhere and always has been "Excuse me"? What would the folks do whose "health" has always prevented them from serving the church, though it never kept them from a single pleasure nor deterred them from "passing the chairs" in the lodge to which they belong? If you were to come to-day to this old-time

prophet and inquire like those men and women of the long ago who questioned him, what would he say to you?

Wouldn't it be surprising to hear him grimly answer, "Be thoughtful and kind and unselfish and Christian in your own home"? Daughters washing the dishes, sweeping the floors, making beds, putting things to rights, for Jesus' sake! Boys and girls remembering to hang up their coats and put away their schoolbooks for Jesus' sake! Fathers being thoughtful and patient when it is so much easier to be impatient! Mothers schooling their voices to keep the edge of temper out of it for Jesus' sake!

Business folk! Employers, be kind to those who work for you; office people, remember that the folks out there in the shop are the same human stuff as yourselves. Treat them so for Jesus' sake. Merchants, be Christians when you weigh and measure. Physicians, never forget that Christ was the great Master Physician, and that souls can be sick as well as bodies. Lawyers, use those keen brains of yours and your knowledge of law to build a juster, safer world at the same time you are building a career. In brief, be Christian in the business you are engaged in, in the place where temptation finds you.

Were John Baptist here, he would surprise us by the innumerable opportunities for Christian living he would discover in everyday life. This is the heroism of the commonplace.

John 13. 3-17

What's the Pay?

The first question a prospective employee asks to-day is "What's the pay?" What's the pay of service? of unselfishness? of using life for others rather than for ourselves? What's the pay?

The world understands the human heart. It never forgets to mention the pay when it makes its offer. The world does not expect us to serve it for naught. The tempter promised even a Christ kingdoms and glory and power as his pay for worshiping him. The world never fails to promise wealth, position, influence, power, pleasure, ease. It never fails to scoff at the folly of sacrifice, the absurdity of unselfishness, the stupidity of service without a *quid pro*

quo. At the first glance its wisdom seems proved. This practical philosophy of the world accords well with our inclinations toward selfishness. We are inclined to believe that it must be true.

But is the world right? Is Jesus Christ wrong?

Is this Christian ideal of service merely a high sentimentalism, beautiful in theory, appealing in its high resolves, but in actual living utterly impractical and foolish?

What do we *get* out of serving others? What's the pay?

A Possible Partnership

Recently in one of the great stores of Philadelphia a young man was admitted to partnership. This achievement crowned fifteen years of tireless, faithful service in the employ of the firm of which he now becomes a partner. All these years the goal before him was this partnership. Other firms tempted him with larger pay. At times his best efforts met with criticism. The hours were long, and the compensation was less than he was worth; but he was determined to win the partnership and he did!

Jesus told Peter that partnership in his glory depends on the willingness to accept his great ideal of service. Jesus can have no partners who are above service. Christianity is supremely living as God lives, feeling as God feels. The Kingdom is not privilege, as the sons of Zebedee thought of it. The Kingdom in reality is all creation realizing the Spirit and the will of God.

One of the rewards of service is this identification with our Lord as one of his earthly partners in the business of making this world the Kingdom where God's will is done by men as angels do it in heaven.

The Sovereignty of Service

The humblest service known in the times of our Lord was washing feet. Had there been a humbler service, the Christ would have performed that. Why should the King of heaven stoop to a servant's task?

Was this a feigned humility?

It was the custom for years, in the Russian court, for the czar, on a certain day, to wash the feet of a few selected beggars. It was a beautiful symbolic act but wholly

artificial. The basin was of gold and held by a court dignitary. The place was a palace. The humiliation itself was only assumed, for nobody, not even the beggars, was permitted to forget that it was a sovereign who performed the humble service.

Was the washing of Christ like that?

We know that it was not. It was symbolic but real. The foot-washing was the expected service of a household rendered a wayfaring guest. Someone had to do it. Jesus chose to be the servant. But there is more than courtesy in it. It is an illuminating commentary on the Christian conception of authority and power. That conception is in a single sentence in one of the gospel stories of this very incident. This is it: "Jesus, knowing that . . . he came forth from God, and goeth unto God," girding himself, served.

The Christian conceives of place as responsibility, of authority as obligation, of sovereignty and lordship as consecration for others. That conception, applied, will transform these and pluck from them their poison of selfishness and set them at the service of humanity. If you would know the reward of service, you need only reverse the reading above and you will have it. If lordship is obligation, and sovereignty is responsibility, then the acceptance of obligation is lordship, and service is sovereignty. And this is true. This is the spiritual version of Carlyle's derivation of "king" from *Konning* can-ning, the able man. The true rewards of service everywhere are the accolades and crowns of human sympathy and divine for the serving man.

The Happiness of Realization

Jesus told his disciples that if they served they would be happy. The reason for this happiness escapes many. The real roots of happiness are not to be found in possession but in satisfaction, in the realization of our hopes, our possibilities, the potential abilities of our lives.

Can we be Christians and not realize in some tangible, definite way the life that possesses us?

Bishop Thoburn once told the story of a supposed missionary who was advised by his friends, while still a

candidate for the field, to avoid entangling himself in all the routine of material service. He promised them that he would keep himself free from all of these for a single duty—the preaching of the gospel. Then he sailed.

Upon his arrival he starts for the interior of the country and, at the first river he must cross, finds a row of lepers lining the path. It comes into his heart that something should be done for these poor people. He has a new love in his heart that day as he crosses the river, and some day it will take form. He next finds a starving child. The little one says, "My parents have deserted me, and I am dying of hunger." He cannot pass that child, yet if he takes the child he becomes responsible for its keeping and he has started the nucleus of an orphanage. He goes on and perhaps finds the parents dying by the roadside. "Well," he says, "I must take care of these people," and he founds an almshouse. He goes on his journey and finds the lame, the sick, the halt, and the blind, and he says, "I must relieve these suffering people." Then he has a medical dispensary and a hospital. They are all there before he reaches his station. His friends come out to visit him, find him thus surrounded, and in surprise exclaim: "We thought you were going to keep yourself free from these things! We thought you were going to preach Christ!" He answers, "That was my intention, but I could not help it!" How could he help it? Not if Christ's Spirit was in his heart! In the face of human misery and need and suffering that Spirit must realize itself in service and its very joy is in this realization. This is Christianity's greatest happiness.

Guideposts and Question Marks

What is Christianity—a belief? an observance? or a life?

How may we learn to live as Christians?

Can we really master the meaning of Christianity without practicing it?

What effect upon our Christianity would it have if we were to leave out of it every expression in service?

What should we expect as the rightful rewards of service?

Which is the easier service—the heroic and utterly sacri-

ficial or the obscure, commonplace duties no one ever recognizes?

Name the great, outstanding things Jesus did during his public ministry.

What duties do you think John Baptist would suggest to the people who live in your town?

Does a Christian serve for nothing? What does he get out of it?

What entitles us to partnership with our Lord—our belief in him? our reverence? or our love?

What is Jesus' own, clear interpretation of love as he gives it in John 14. 21?

Can a selfish Christian be a happy Christian?

CHAPTER XII

THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The Initiation of Conversion

Most of us belong to something—a lodge, a fraternity, a society—into which we were formally initiated. Most initiations would be utterly foolish to an onlooker with no idea of their backgrounds of friendship and fraternity and social significance. Imagine coming unexpectedly upon a group of men or women solemnly parading round and round a room, wearing strange clothing, uttering language that if seriously repeated on the street would occasion arrest for an unsettled mind! Yet we do it, every one of us. Why?

Why should any self-respecting man wish to make himself ridiculous before others, do foolish things at another's behest, and pay for the privilege? It does sound foolish, doesn't it? Yet we do it, most of us. (Glance at that lapel of yours. Honestly, now, doesn't that lodge pin make you feel a little foolish?)

You know why you did this thing. This was the way into the fellowship of a group of highly respected men or women in your community. It was the necessary initiation into the membership of some great order to which it is an honor to belong.

But suppose you had been permitted to enter that order without any rite, ceremony, vow, or pledge: would it mean the same to you? In your own heart you know that underneath all the silly trumpery of vow and ceremony there are great living principles. You know that fellowship, the real fellowship, is not in these outer things but in the mutual loyalty of covenanted lives to great commanding truths from which the fellowship springs.

To be converted is to be initiated into the fellowship of the saved, to become a member of the great fraternity of Christ, to be made one of the household of God.

And the bond of the household, the right to fellowship, is in a life redeemed and cleansed and possessed by the Spirit of God himself.

Matt. 4. 18-22

A Fellowship of Activity

Christianity is not an honorary fraternity into which we are solemnly voted, but which never holds a meeting or plans an activity. Jesus called the fishermen of Galilee to be his comrades and, that they might understand the call, he named it "fishing." Had he called farmers, it probably would have been to be "husbandmen of righteousness." Had they been soldiers, it would have been to the "comradeship of warfare." Christianity is a fellowship of doing, and a Christian is expected to be a doer: for there is a kingdom to be brought in, a world to be won, and we are the workmen of Christ in the task.

To be converted is to be "taken on" as one of the great working company of God. It is the pledge of the soldier, the vow of a knight-companion. In the ancient chivalric days of knighthood to be made a knight meant more than attaining great honor. It meant reception into the most distinguished order of soldiers the realm possessed. From the day of the vigil, the accolade, the new knight was under the orders of his king, his commander. Is it not possible that our treatment of conversion as the attainment of security rather than the assumption of responsibility has cheapened its meaning and hidden its glory for many eyes! Does it not mean a loyalty as well as love, the command to do as well as the forgiveness of sin?

Luke 10. 25-37

Adjacence—Geographical, Spiritual

In these recent days the good, old-fashioned word "neighbor" has fallen from its former high estate. It used to be a warm-hearted, kindly word—a word picturing folks leaning on the fence between, folks borrowing and lending, sending over a pie for supper, and exchanging

work in the hayfield. Now it is the description of the man in the flat upstairs, the person who resides in the other half of a double house. All the warmth and friendliness have gone out of it. That lawyer in the Bible started this when he intimated that neighborliness had restrictions. Men begin by limiting it to the folks on their street, in their block, and then by squeezing the last bit of tenderness out of it entirely and making it a mere title for near dwellers.

Neighborliness does not flourish under foot-rule determinations. Surveyor's chains never yet established fellowship. Fellowship is not a geographical limitation—it is a spiritual realization. As a spiritual thing it makes the Samaritan the Jew's neighbor and, by implication, every race a neighbor, every man a brother, and the sole necessary claim to fellowship mere human need.

The Greatest Sign of Distress

Most fraternal orders possess some predetermined signal whereby one of the order may secretly ask help of another. That sign given is obligation by all the solemn vows and promises and principles of the order. The two may never have met before. Their stations in life may be widely apart. Their individual characteristics may render personal friendship utterly impossible, but each belongs to the other by virtue of the order; and that which personal appeal never could command, fraternal claim has a right to demand. The defect in the system is its exclusiveness. Another may have greater need than the member of the fraternity but, not possessing the sign of distress, has no right to claim our help.

Jesus taught the lawyer that need always, everywhere—anybody's need—was the greatest sign of distress, the most commanding signal a human could give another human in whose heart was the Spirit of God. The claim of need upon the Christian is not that the needy belongs, but that, as a Christian, you belong. It makes Christians everywhere a fraternity obligated to help the needy regardless of the needy one's identification with the fraternity. If we only practiced it, what a fraternity this of ours would be!

John 13. 31-35

Proving Your Membership

Men have devised intricate means to establish the fact of identity with secret orders—passwords and signs and grips and "work" whereby one stranger may reveal himself a brother to another. John devised a better scheme for Christians—prove it by love. Love is such a distinctive thing in a world of hatred, jealousies, criticisms, and suspicion that merely loving one another will identify Christians everywhere.

Doesn't that shame us? Does the world know us by that sign? It knows us by our theological controversies, by our sectarian bickerings, by our pettishness, our quarrelings, our feuds and factions. And John declared that we must be known by love.

The world wants for such a fellowship. Its mass of humanity is riven and shattered and torn apart by all the selfish, hateful charges of anger and distrust. Race is cleft from race, nation is separated from nation, class is divided from class. Christianity alone can reach across these dividing chasms and unite men. Let Christians prove their membership in this great fellowship by love. Two Christians cannot hate each other, two Christians cannot go to war against each other, two Christians cannot distrust and suspect each other. Mark that fact, and wherever Christian men are found, the spirit of love will be found—like that marvelous cementing process uniting the broken bones of the human body, pouring forth to unite in delicate, then firmer, at last adamantine strength the Christ lovers of this world. Only an internationalism like this can make our divided world one.

Rom. 14. 13-23

The Discipline of Fellowship

The essential in brotherhood is helpfulness. To be a brother should mean being a helper. That is the purpose of binding together in one order neophytes and masters. The learner is taught by the one who has learned; the

master is forever disciplined by his responsibilities to the neophyte.

Peculiarly this mutual obligation, this discipline of fellowship, is true in our Christian fellowship. Christian history is the record of the imparting of the Christian code of conduct from generation to generation. That which the fathers received from Christ they impart to us.

Practical duties play peculiar havoc with announced obligations. Brotherhood meets the sternest test not in formulating its principles but in applying them. Whatever the proletariat brotherhood meant on paper, it means a decidedly different thing realized in Bolshevist Russia. However beautiful appeared the first Christian community in Jerusalem it had its stern problems when transplanted among idol worshipers.

Even freedom must be limited in the discipline of love's fellowship. Meat offered to idols may mean nothing to the man who has broken the mental thrall of the idol worship, but it may mean his brother's destruction if his brother is not yet free. Brotherhood is more important than appetite—more important even than freedom. No age needs this lesson more than the present one. The testing stone of democracy is this very principle. Just now men want freedom without restriction. They resent a democracy that implies limitation for the sake of any. Apparently, we would prefer a clash of liberties and the victory to the strongest rather than a juster, if more limited, freedom for all. This practical problem was amusingly demonstrated some years ago by a certain boys' club. The leader proposed that a plot of ground be rented and divided into separate gardens to be tended by each boy. The proceeds to a certain amount were to finance the summer camp. The surplus was to be the reward of individual initiative. However, as in grown-up society, some toiled not, neither did they hoe. Whereupon great feeling arose. Were those who did not work to profit at the expense of those who worked? Was unrestricted freedom as to the amount of toil equitable with a common division of profits? Of course, the answer is obvious. The better freedom for all will cost a few the sacrifice of greater liberty. So in Christian brotherhood

the restriction of perfectly justifiable freedom for the sake of the weaker brother will make a better, nobler brotherhood.

1 Cor. 12. 12-27

Were You Ever a Foot?

Were you ever a foot—just part of a body? to be tramped on, to stump on, step after step, bearing the burden of the rest of the body? How much better to be an eye, seeing all the beautiful sights and bearing no burden, instead of that trudging, burdened member the foot! or to be the ear, listening to all the news, the cries of the world, the sweetness of music the foot never can hear! Sounds reasonable—doesn't it?—from the foot's point of view. Possibly the eye and the ear, were these permitted to join in the conversation, might have their point of view also: to be an eye, sensitive and exposed, while the foot is shod; to be an ear, deafened and filled with all the unpleasant things the foot never hears. Eyestrain is as bad as weariness, and astigmatism as unpleasant as rheumatism. What would a foot do without an eye? an eye without an ear? an ear without an eye?

Paul gave us a parable of a working brotherhood. Our fellowship as Christians is the fellowship of a living body. Some must see for us, and some hear. Some must toil for us, and some bear burdens. But whatever we do is not for ourselves but for all. Each is served and each must serve.

Sometimes the impairment of the physical body discomforts all the members. What pathos in the strong man who is blinded, in the keen brain housed in a body stiffened by disease to rigid uselessness! Christian fellowship often suffers because indifference paralyzes the hands that might serve, or the feet that might carry, or dims the eye that might vision great things, or dulls the ear that might hear God's commands. We cannot sever ourselves from these dulled, dimmed, palsied souls. There's another way to think of this. We, though we are ourselves the dulled one, the dimmed one, cannot be severed from his body of life. Let us strive, foot and hand and eye and ear, to be

the body he desires, worthy to be the tabernacle of his Spirit, his manifestation before men.

Heb. 12. 18-24

The Goal of Our Fellowship

Men are dreaming great dreams across the earth these days. The mind of man is overleaping the petty boundaries of other ages, nations, races, classes, and daring to think in world unities: world brotherhood, internationalism, world commerce, world movements, the world kingdom of God. Our minds run as naturally to these final unities as our fathers' minds to national, racial unities.

Where runneth the mind of Christ? Toward what does all this vast brotherhood of his disciples move? What is to be at the end of the Christian pilgrimage through time?

So vast, so amazing, so stupendous, is the description in Hebrews that no single moment of thought can compass it; but this we know: the final and including unity of the universe will not be political—we are not moving toward a world republic. It will not be industrial. It will not be a world soviet. It will not be capitalistic—a colossal trust of trusts. The final unity will be spiritual.

The hopeful things, the blessed things, in Christianity are foregleams of God's great day. There are those who picture that day with the colors of Rembrandt—dark and sinister. There are prophets who paint it with the grotesqueries of Doré. But we are come not to Sinai but to Sion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the crowned Christ.

I do not know what eternity will be like, but I am sure every great thing Christianity ever knew will be realized there a thousandfold, every grace will become the habit of forever, every love will sound like a harp string, every faith will lift itself like a fair pillar of marble, every prayer will become a reality. But the substance of it all will be that which is closest to the heart of man—a wondrous fellowship of love forever. Gone wars forever! Departed wrong, injustice, exploitations, profiteering, murder, robberies, extortions, cruelties! Gone plottings, deceits, stratagems, hidden diplomacies, intrigues! Gone

suspicion, distrusts, jealousies! Gone! for this is the age of love, and love is better than the age of gold. The marvel and the challenge of the vision of the goal is its seed in this imperfect, familiar Christian fellowship we follow here and now.

Guideposts and Question Marks

How does anyone become a Christian? Who has a right to initiate him? What is expected of him?

What kind of a fellowship does Christianity offer? What is its purpose?

What makes one a neighbor as Jesus thought of neighborliness?

What is the Christian's signal of distress?

What is John's proof of membership in the Christian fraternity?

Can we have fellowship without responsibility? without limiting selfishness? without consideration of the other man's weaknesses?

Why has no Christian the right to make questions of conduct and freedom purely individual?

Suppose every Christian were free to follow his own interpretation of life as Christian: what effect would this have on the growing fellowship of the Kingdom?

Why should I be hampered by the weakness of other men when I am strong enough to live alone?

What is to be the end of our Christian fellowship? What great purpose is it to serve?

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

Luke 12. 13-21

Bankrupt for the Hereafter

The picture of the rich fool is one of the most graphic in that wonderful picture gallery of Christ. No writer of any age, of any race, has portrayed with so few strokes and in such vividness that familiar absorption of human life in the getting of things. We see the whole process of it under way beneath our very eyes: prosperity, expectation, preparation, enlargement to renew the same selfish circuit with a wider sweep and greater gains. The process is endless, as many a man has found who began it with the expectation of quitting when he had made his fortune.

The picture is as accurate to-day as for two thousand years ago. We need only substitute profits for crops, a corporation for the land, factories and warehouses for barns, a great city mansion and a summer estate and yacht and racing stable and costly cars and pseudo art treasures, a box at the opera, political influence, an enviable ambassadorship, and all the rest for the fool's eat-and-drink-and-be-merry, and the results are the same—plenty here, bankruptcy in God's to-morrow.

It is the absurdity of making provision for three score years and ten of living here and none whatever for millenniums of life yonder—millionaires for a day and bankrupts forever; luxury on earth and beggary in heaven; banquets here and fastings throughout eternity! Who would be such a fool?

Strange as it may seem, the race of the rich fool never fails to perpetuate itself.

A certain tribe in Africa elects a new king every seven years but it invariably kills its old king. For seven years the member of the tribe enjoying this high honor is pro-

vided with every luxury known to savage life. During these years his authority is absolute, even to the power of life and death. For seven years he rules, is honored and surfeited with possessions, but at the end he dies. Every member of the tribe is aware of this, for it is a custom of long standing; but there is never lacking an applicant for the post. For seven years of luxury and power men are willing to sacrifice the remainder of life's expectation. They are only ignorant pagans, yet in the proudest civilization of our day men of intelligence and leadership are now making the same choice between things now and bankruptcy hereafter. Scores and hundreds and thousands are willing to be bankrupts through eternity if they may only win their millions here.

The Compulsion of Wealth-Getting

What strange compulsion is this which drives men so persistently to the acquiring of wealth? See their faces growing strained and anxious, their hair whitening, nerves shattered, digestion ruined, face hollowed, then premature age, breakdown, death! What strange malady is this? What motive is sufficient to make men forget even their own health for the sake of this goal they set themselves? How mad it all is!—the purchase of more land to grow more crops to compel more barns to hold more possessions to make possible the purchase of more land to—it's all mad folly, but why?

The tiny, secret, driving spring of it all is desire: desire first prompted by fear—the fear of hunger, of nakedness, of homelessness, of want and poverty. The motive may be measured by mean temperatures. It rises as the mercury falls. The greatest players of the game live in our vast temperate regions, where fear and opportunity find their most perfect equilibrium.

Desire is an expensive thing. It feeds upon satisfaction. The thing that keeps so many folks poor on expanding incomes is that desires expand more rapidly than incomes. The last thing to deflate will be desire, and the primitive, germinal form of desire is just the animal need for food and shelter and comfort.

Unchristian Compulsion

It is possible to understand a compulsion like this in a beast's life or a pagan's life, but why should it find place in the life of a child of God? We call God our Father. Do we mean it? If he is our Father, why worry about things to eat and to drink and to wear? The little child in the home seldom worries over these things. Father does the worrying. If God is truly our Father, then these common, familiar needs are his affair, not ours. To worry and fret and fear is to deny the very Fatherhood we say we believe in. All the worries and cares and problems from which we suffer are known to him. To doubt this is to be unchristian; to permit the compulsion of things to drive us, as they drive others who do not know our God, is to disown this wonderful Father.

Luke 12. 31-32

The Nobler Compulsion

Jesus substitutes for the desire of things the quest of the Kingdom. There is bigger business than making money. Many men made this discovery during the Great War. Every "dollar-a-year" man who honestly served for the sake of serving found in the use of his trained abilities for the nation a satisfaction that money-making with the same talents never had given him. Life's talents must be used. Our energies are given that they may be employed. It is only the purpose that must be changed. Whenever the desire for the Kingdom possesses the means, the abilities, the vision, the energy, of the very Christian men who are now using these in the promotion of great, world-wide business enterprises, there will be a change in the earth. Here and there men have caught that vision. God had his "dollar-a-year" men long before the government but he needs more of them, many of them—needs men with "empires in their brains," as the poet sings.

Luke 12. 33

The Great Adventure

The other day a boy said to his mother: "Mother, what

can I do when I grow up? They haven't left anything for us boys to do!" True. The poles have been discovered. The last wilderness has been penetrated. The last strange beast has been found. The last desert island is occupied! What adventure is left for the oncoming generations?

Why not the Kingdom?

The words in Luke about selling and giving put the Kingdom's quest in the adventure class. A first-class adventure must be superlatively difficult, present fearful hazards, and demand unusual courage. We are to sell out, give away entirely, then attempt! Jesus offered the young ruler a great adventure, but his courage waned before its difficulty. Jesus offered the same adventure to the fishermen of Galilee, and their first interrogation was "What will we get?" Jesus offers it to-day to you. There is sacrifice in it, danger in it, abandon in it, but at the end the achieving of God's purpose through the ages.

1 Cor. 15. 20-28

The Unbreakable Line

The great unbreakable line of the enemy is that barrier which men call Death. No foray that human beings have ever conducted has been able to break through that line to the other side. The greatest question of our age is whether we live beyond the grave. Death is a conqueror. At his saddle bow hang the crowns of kings. He has made booty of Alexander's sword, of Cæsar's fame, of Napoleon's dreams. These conquered the earth, but Death conquered them. Men perfect inventions that annihilate time and space, but no man has ever yet found the way to conquer Death. Like that grim, final, fortress line of Germany's last stand, death lies across our path to immortality.

The Final Conqueror

Death conquers all in time, but the Lord of time must conquer Death. If God cannot conquer Death, then he is no more God. He is defeated in his own world. Death is earth's final dispute with power. Unless God conquered here, the cross is only a gibbet, the tomb only a

sepulcher, the resurrection only a lie! But, praise to God's almightiness, by his resurrection crosses have become thrones, and tombs have become thresholds to immortality.

2 Cor. 4. 16 to 5.10

Earth's Farthest Hope

Hope always lifts the eyes. Those who are hopeless never see the mountains. They cannot. Their eyes are down. Hoping for the goal keeps the runner's head up. Hoping for the summit keeps the mountain climber's gaze upward. Hoping for heaven lifts the gaze of mortals above the hills of mortality.

Every thinking human being knows that Death will end his career. That is as inevitable as

> "Twilight and evening bell,
> And after that the dark!"

Some of the proudest hopes earth has ever cherished have ended in a mound in the grass—fortune, fame, friendship, folly! Only the Christian's hope goes further. The tomb scarcely deters him in his onward stride toward eternal life. It matters not that this earthly house in which he has lived be dissolved into dust again: he has a house in heaven. It troubles him not that this old, frayed cloak of earth slips from his shoulders: he has a heavenly robe he is anxious to put on. What if earth's treasure falls from the stiffened fingers? He has riches laid by in heaven. There he is not naked nor a beggar nor homeless, for he has made ready, and his Father awaits him. Death is not tragedy to the dead. It is the absorption of this meager fragment of existence we call life into the fullness of immortality. Thinking this way about death, and speaking of it not in funereal tone, we can understand what Charles Frohman meant when, shortly before the sinking of the *Lusitania,* he said: "Death? Why should I fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure in this world!"

Homes and Home-Going

Most of us are wayfarers. Where do you now live? Where were you born? How do you happen to be where

you are? Where is home? Most of us were born in one place, educated in another, and have lived in half a dozen communities. If you use the word home in the hearing of our fathers, they instantly think of an old, comfortable homestead, perhaps cleared from the primeval forest or staked out on the virgin prairie by an ancestor's hands. Speak of home in the hearing of the children of to-day, and all it evokes is a moving picture of the successive flats in which we have lived and the moving vans that carried us from one to the other. Here, truly, we have no continuing city. Where, then, is home? Paul says it is in heaven. There will be no moving in heaven. Homes there will not be figured on the basis of a certain prescribed number of cubic feet of breathing space. The price of front footage will not affect the character of our mansions. Building restrictions will be needless, and no one will forbid children! We shall hold free title forever. Surely this will be *home!*

We enjoy these delightful, temporary housings we call home. We try to make them as beautiful and comfortable as our means will permit, but really we are away from home. This is only a stopping place. Every day we spend here is a day spent away from home—yonder. We are willing to give all this for the real home that is to be ours by and by.

Is the Title Clear?

No deed is better than the title it conveys. A flaw in that may make our claim to ownership worthless. The first thing a prospective purchaser wishes to see is an abstract. Even the hope of this wonderful heavenly mansion is meaningless if we have no clear title to its possession. That title cannot be bought. It must be given and it is given by the One owning heaven, but only to the worthy. Paul said that this hope was so worth while that he labored, made it his ambition, to make sure that he would be acceptable as a heavenly citizen. Our modern world laughs at the Judgment. It blithely assumes that its fear is only a shadow of ancient superstition; but in its soberest moments it is not so sure. Paul has no doubts. Heaven is not easily won. Its blessings belong to those of

whom its Lord is sure. He for one is determined not to lose his title to a mansion in the skies. Heaven-hoping men cannot jeopardize their expectations for any rewards that evil offers. The hope of immortality sobers us, steadies us. Life must live up to heaven.

Rev. 21. 1-7

Seeing Heaven

John the blest is the only man who, living, has ever beheld the glories of heaven. Mankind will never get over the habit of poring over his wondrous story; for what he saw, we hope to see. And all God permits for the rest of us is hoping. It is better so. A heaven known as familiarly as London or Paris would cease to be a hope. It is the unattainable that lures us like a star in the sky. All her life a certain woman had dreamed of seeing Boston—when, at last, her feet actually trod its streets, she could only remark, "Why, how dirty the streets are!" Boston in actuality had ceased to be the city of her dream. I expect to see France some day, and Italy. I hope to see heaven. I am not greatly concerned about my trip to Paris; I am mightily concerned about heaven.

John tells us that heaven is a wonderful place—more beautiful than any city of earth, marvelously free from those things which give pain and which distress us in our earthly places. There is a fabled continent called Atlantis over which the waves of ocean now roll, burying in their depths vast cities and the remains of ancient civilization. Whether such a continent actually existed I know not and care little; but whether there is a heaven I care mightily. If there is no Atlantis, it is only another tradition proved a myth; if there is no heaven, then hopes die with the setting sun at the western gate, the story of man ends in a tragedy of uselessness, and the mightiest hope that humanity has ever cherished is proved a lie. It cannot be. There is a heaven. Its hopes are only the reflected glory of its wondrous reality cast up to the skies of man's ignorance, there to kindle in his soul that flame of faith which is the torch lighting his dark way of death toward immortality.

The End of the Trail

Life's vast mystery leads somewhere. The footprints of its myriads of wayfarers are all turned onward; nowhere can you find a returning trail. It is for the hope of that which lies at the end we endure the hardships and the difficulties of the journey. We are always moving onward toward the future. Humanity's great goals are farther than earth. From some hilltop, somewhere, the trail takes to the skies. John, in Patmos, saw the end of earth's long pilgrimage. Heaven is at the trail's end. Heaven, and God, and happiness, and peace, and home, and forever—it's true!

Where is heaven? A little boy in a rescue mission answered one day when a visitor asked them where heaven was. He said, "It's just back on our street since mother got acquainted with Jesus!" Yes, heaven may be found on earth as well as in the skies—found in Pittsburgh and San José, in Birmingham and Saint Paul, in Boston and San Diego. It may be found, but you'll have to look for it. The mightiest fact men have ever discovered about heaven is that it begins here. It begins anywhere men turn their faces toward God in love and hope. Many of its promised blessings are realized here. We need not wait for death's translation to inherit them. We are not living so that we may reach a place; we are living so that we may make a life. He who finds God able to wipe away tears here, to comfort here, will be at home in heaven. But there are two conditions: he must thirst and he must be a conqueror.

The life of the Spirit is a thirst for God. There is no other figure that so clearly presents that life as it must be to realize God. It must be a yearning of the life and soul of man like the yearning of those parched tissues which cry for a draft of the springs of earth. There cannot be burning without yearning. Cold hearts thirst little. The promise is for men who must have God or perish from their very desire of him.

The other condition is that life must come as a conqueror. That is what life is for. It is discipline by trial. That is a great saying by John Burroughs in one of his

recent books: "The problem of evil is the problem of life. Nature is not half good, half bad; she is wholly good or wholly bad according to our relation to her." The conquered life has lost the right to live; the conquering life has won the right to immortality. We do not conquer by ourselves, for there in the midst of the conflict is always One watching ready to help; but we must will to conquer ere he can help.

The City of Forever is to be a community of conquerors. There will be trophies there from every conflict of the human heart. Life is destined for victory, not defeat. Myriad souls will fall in battle before the victory is won, but the battle will be won. For God is on the side of life, not a neutral. Let us live, then, like conquerors!

The highest honor the ancient emperors could bestow upon their victorious generals as they returned in triumph was to make them members of the royal family and call them sons. God will name his overcomers sons. With them he shares all things. This is not new to the Christian. Long before we were conquerors, when we were helpless and hopeless and defeated, he taught us to call him Father. We become conquerors because he became our Father. That is the Christian order. Fatherhood is not our reward; it is our means of victory. Thus hope is nourished by all we have studied before—by belief, by experience, by prayer, by worship, by our fellowship of the church, by the Book and the service we render in his name. Hope without the life is nothing; hope with the life is everything. Heaven is only that life realizing itself in the eternal friendship and fellowship of God.

Guideposts and Question Marks

What was wrong in the rich fool's hope? Was he wrong to hope for prosperity? Is it wrong to hope for financial gain?

Is God's Fatherhood sentimental? practical? What do you think? Dare we take practical problems of food and clothing and shelter to him?

Why is it that men are so much more interested in seeking fortune than in seeking the Kingdom?

Could God make use of the same abilities used in big business to promote his kingdom?

How do you think God could use a great financier? a great executive? a great industrial leader? a great salesman? teacher?

Why is worry sinful? Why do we worry if we are the children of an Almighty God?

Would some folks be embarrassed to have others know where their treasure is? Has a Christian a right to keep his heart where he would be ashamed to have God see it?

Why should God come suddenly? Is it to entrap us? to catch us napping? Does he trust us?

Why is Death the last enemy Christ will overcome? Has anyone ever conquered Death but Jesus?

What is the greatest hope in the world? Why hope for heaven?

How do we know that we have a "house in the skies"?

Why is heaven invisible? Why free from care, pain, suffering, death? What is its secret?

Why was it necessary for all things to be made new?

What connection is there between the thought of thirst and the figure of water of life as Paul uses it in speaking about eternal life?

Why do conquerors receive the reward promised in heaven? What about those who did not conquer?

Is there any life greater than a Christian's life?

AFTERWORD

We have spent these weeks together talking about these essentials of personal Christianity. Remember that the Christian life is a life of experience but, also, it is a life of habit. Habit is the mechanical means life uses to preserve experience. But for habit much that is valuable in experience would be lost forever to the world. You will never become a stable Christian until you have acquired the habits of a Christian. They are simple and familiar: the habit of prayer, the habit of the Book, the habit of worship, the habit of service, the habit of fellowship, the habit of faith. The Christian who habitually prays and feeds on the Book will have the means at hand for the sustaining of his spiritual life. No Christian can be a Christian alone. God set us in families and flocks; he set us also in congregations. Don't be an alien. Join God's household, the church. Be faithful, loyal, systematic in your attendance upon its services. You go there to meet God, to worship him, to join your brethren in his house. The sermon may be poor, the music worse, the congregation small, the church itself may be shabby, of little reputation; but it is possible to find God there. That is your business and the church's business. The Christian must give as well as receive. To be merely a receiver and never a giver is to stagnate. Be a living spring, and not a stagnant pool—pour yourself out for others. Learn the joyous fact that God has made you a steward, that all you possess, all you are, belongs to him. It is merely intrusted to you to use in his dear name. Your life, your health, your talents, your strength, your time, your money, are his, to be administered in his name and in his spirit by you, with responsibility to God. No attitude toward God so surely determines experience as this attitude of stewardship, the attitude that holds all at his will. It will forever take the struggle out of your Christian living if you will make this attitude yours. For each and every reader of this book I

wish that personal, steadfast, marvelous experience which Jesus sums up, in his masterly way, in two words—that as you pray in *spirit* and *truth*, looking up to Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, you may be able to say, "*My* Lord and *my* God!"

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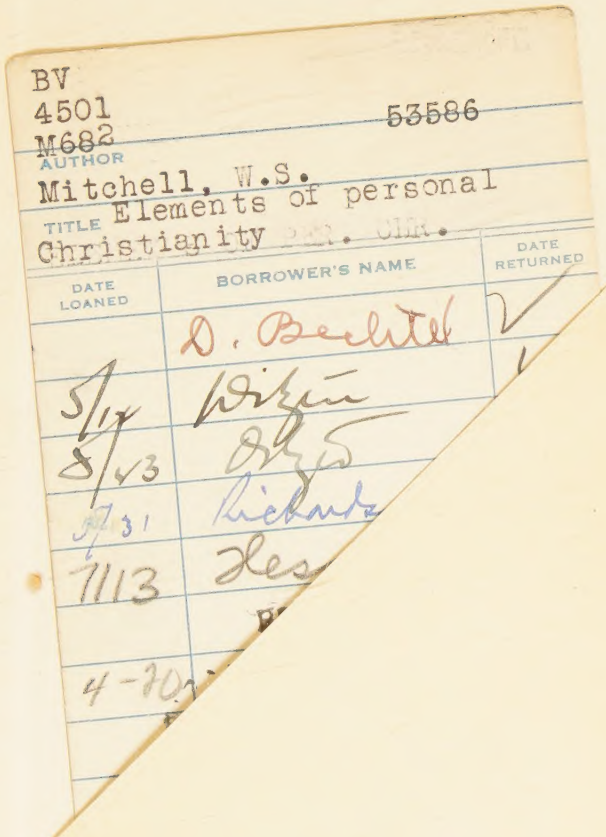

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